

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Forename:	Susan
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Interviewee POB:	Felsőgöd, Hungary
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REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV281
NAME: Susan Pollack
DATE: 16 October 2023
LOCATION: London
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

[00:00:00]

Today is the 16th of October 2023 and we're conducting an interview with Mrs Susan Pollack. My name is Bea Lewkowicz and we're in London. Can you please tell me your name?

Yes, I'm Susan Pollack.

And what was your name at birth? And where and when were you born, please?

I was born in 1930, September the 9th. I was born in a small village called Felsőgöd, located not far from the capital, Budapest, and I was born there. My mum and dad moved there, actually. It's a very simple, peasant kind of existence.

And what was your name at birth, Susan?

My birth name was Blau, B-l-a-u. Blau.

Thank you so much, Susan, for agreeing to interview, for having agreed to be interviewed for the AJR Refugee Voices Archive.

Thank you for asking me.

Can you please tell us a little bit about your family background?

My family background actually consists of quite a large number and many of them I hardly knew. But my grandpa, who I think owned this big pub in another village, was very hospitable every summer. We children were welcome there and we spent our summers there. And enjoyed it very much, because he had very good sort of gardens and singing and dancing. [00:02:14] He had a pub.

Yes.

He had a pub, quite a big pub. And very often, he sort of prepared for – the pub for weddings for the local people. So, it was jolly. At the same time. He lined up the grandchildren, us, because that's where we were, there in the summer. And he said, 'Have you said the Shema this morning?' and we nodded. Well, did we say it? I don't think so [laughs]. But he was very hospitable. We slept there the whole summer and used to go – he had horses. And I was one of them, going around trying to sell some wine and alcohol, other alcohol.

What was his name, Susan, your grandfather? Do you remember?

I don't, I don't remember his name anymore. I don't.

Don't worry. And what was the name of the place? You said it was near –

Yes, it was in Nógrád, in Nógrád. It was quite a journey from us, Felsőgöd to Nógrád. But my father had a bi – a motorbike, it was quite unusual for the time. And I was very proud sitting at the back, holding on to him. [00:04:03] And that was quite unique in those days, to have that experience. And we used to go every day shouting, 'Do you want any alcohol? Do you want any...?', you know, selling, that's what we were doing.

What – you said it was a pub, what was it called? Did it have a name or...?

It might have had a name. But it was located sort of in the centre of the village. The name of the pub, I don't remember. But I don't think there were many pubs there, somehow.

And wasn't big? Was it? What do you remember?

It was a very big one. And we children somehow managed to climb up to the top, almost to the top of the place, and look down and watch the dancing and the singing that was going on. And so, it was a very happy time for us.

So, how many grandchildren were there? You said all the grandchildren.

All the grandchildren assembled. I don't quite know how many we were. We weren't that many. I mean, my brother came and myself. And there were other grandchildren, I think living in Budapest. We might have been perhaps six or seven, perhaps.

And how many children were there? Your grandfather, how many children did he have?

Oh, he had a lot of grandchildren, yes. He had his son living in Nógrád and they probably have had how many children? [00:06:06] It must have had about seven, eight or maybe more children. And they came and they all kind of worked.

And he was quite Orthodox?

Yes, yes, yes. We got lined up every morning, as I said earlier, Grandpa said, 'Did you say your Shema this morning?' Yes, Orthodox, yes. But at the same time, it was a happy life, a joyful life, in the sense that having a good family.

And your father was his son, yes? Your father was?

It was my mum's.

Oh, you're mother's father?

My – yes. My grandpa, my other grandpa lived in another village. I didn't see him that often. But later on, as his wife, I think his wife died, he moved in the village. He moved to the village where we lived, in Felsőgöd. And I know that very well, because after school I took the food every day to him and his son. So, that – because men didn't cook in those days.

That was your father's father?

That was my – that's right, my father's, yes. Yes, so he lived with us. And I remember him, when he passed away, we took – I mean, the ceremonies had been performed and his body was buried in Felsőgöd, yeah.

[00:08:15] *This was before the war?*

Before the war, long before the war.

So, he's got a grave there?

He's got a grave. I had visited it. But it's very difficult now to, actually. I was back in Felsőgöd and I couldn't get into the cemetery. For some reason I couldn't find a key.

It's locked, was locked? But it's there?

But it's there. But I think they had to protect it, that's the reason.

So, tell us a little bit about your parents. How did they meet? What were they like? What do you remember?

Well, the little bit I know and I'm not even certain if that's entirely reliable. Marriage-families met, the two families met. I think they were discussing their contribution to the young couple. And I think the choice of the partner needed to be approved, because here I

was, a little girl, and I heard my father having spoken about, ‘Oh, there’s a nice young man, sort of a rabbi’s son. That would be nice for you.’ And I just listened and I thought, hm. [00:10:00] I didn’t say anything. You couldn’t contradict elder people [laughs], I knew my place.

So, you think your parents were introduced to each other, your parents?

Definitely.

And when did they get married?

They got married shortly after they met, or they were introduced or they had agreed. I think parents had to agree too. And they got married. My mum was a very, very domesticated type of woman. And had the children, only two children, only two children. But she was definitely stay-at-home. Stay-at-home, it was a man who made the rules and regulations.

And Felsőgöd, did anyone – how did they get to Felsőgöd? Who lived there?

Well, I’ve got a photo actually, when my father came out to see whether that would be possible to open up this little wood and coal business. My mum came from Nógrád, my – the other side, they came from Derecske [ph]. I think it must have been an introduction, yes, arranged marriage.

But why did they move to Felsőgöd?

Well, because there was at that time, I think, there were no other wood and coal sellers.

[00:12:06] *So, he opened the business?*

He opened up a little business, yes.

For wood and...?

Wood and coal.

Wood and coal.

Wood and coal, and the wood, we used to buy that because I was curious to see what – who is that? I remember seeing the bishops coming to my home on the street, and they stood up, beautiful. They came to us, because they had wood, sort of the areas, you know, where they were selling wood. And so, they were negotiating. And so, we had the horses and we brought the wood, we chopped the wood and used it, sold it.

And tell us a bit about Felsőgöd, Susan. What – how many people live there? How many Jews live there?

Not many Jews live there in Felsőgöd at all. You could hardly make a *minyan*, you know, ten men. But it was enough for a *minyan*, more in the summer, because it was on the Danube and it was popular. However, swimming in the Danube is the most dangerous thing to do, because it's a very powerful water and it drags you down. And a lot of people died from actually taking a chance. So, but it was a lovely place, in the sense that looking at the Danube.

[00:14:10] Perhaps having maybe some small animals for the city kids, and they used to have fun with us, because we were the village people, they were the advanced. You know, they were, 'I am somebody' [laughs] and we knew it.

They would come in the summer?

They would come in the summer.

They had little houses? Or they came...?

They had – I think they rented, yes, yes, because not far from Felsőgöd, on the other side of the river, it was a very nice, touristy place.

Were there hotels, hotels?

I don't think they were. Might have been perhaps, might have been sort of small, little places perhaps. I don't know. I don't know.

Was there a synagogue in Felsőgöd?

Yes, yes. We had, or they somehow contributed, somebody must have contributed to build a synagogue, a wooden synagogue. And there was a ladder at the back, because men were separated from woman. It was a dangerous thing, I wasn't very good on the ladder. But I think we were sitting, yeah, I don't know. Did we go upstairs? I think so.

You mean a ladder to go – for the women to go to the first floor?

Yeah, and since then I don't like it [both laugh]. I'm fearful. Yeah.

So, the small – it must be a very small community.

A very small community. Very small.

And what did – professionally, what did the other Jewish people – what did they...?

Well, depends. [00:16:00] Some Jewish people, they came from – they came out from Budapest or bigger cities, and had a holiday there. I don't really know what their work was, I don't know. But they were more educated, I think, because Hungary offered good possibilities for education. And if they didn't find that in Hungary, those who had money sent their children to Vienna. We didn't do that, we didn't have that kind of money. But that was sort of the system.

Did you swim in the Danube?

I was fearful, because the Danube was, I mean, we knew the nature of the river. And in fact, on one occasion when I was there, my next-door – our next-door neighbour got drowned. It wasn't unusual to see that. So no, I wouldn't. I wouldn't swim in the Danube, unless I sat on the side of it and that was for something to do.

What other things do you remember from growing up in Felsőgöd?

As a child, I was a goalkeeper. They needed – the boys needed somebody to become a goalkeeper. So oh, I want to do it and I became a goalkeeper. And, but the boys were a bit tough, you know. [00:18:02] 'Do this, do that.' I didn't care but I did it [laughs].

And do you have a brother?

I had one brother.

Older or younger than you?

Older, two years older than myself. Yeah, nice boy. Nice boy. Sort of- the boys kept apart. They were in a – they kept themselves as being in a different class and the girls did what they were told to do. Especially in my household, strict household.

In which way?

When I had been told to do something, clear away the table, couldn't make a face. 'Oh, must I?' No, you were told, my father was very strict.

Yes, talking about Felsőgöd.

Talking about Felsőgöd. And when I came back, just to give you an example how my life was, I came back from school in Felsőgöd. Immediately, I had to – I was given up to two pots of food to take to my grandpa, who came to live with us. Not in the same house, but we had

another little place for my grandpa and his son. And so, they had food. Every day I was doing that. I got on my bike and that was sort of my duty. I liked it, I liked it.

But you said it was a strict household? You had to –

[00:20:01] Very strict, very, very. My mum wasn't so strict but my father, yes, yes. Men were, in villages, you know. Perhaps it might have been different in the capitals, I don't know. But in the villages, yes, I had my duties.

What are the duties? What did you have to do?

Oh, cooking. I was good on the sewing machine. I was only a little girl. We had a sewing machine, because there was no shops and we wouldn't spend money on clothing. So, we had a treadle sewing machine and I learned how to use it. It came useful, I thought, but I was mistaken. And that was – but I knew how to use the sewing machine. And I could do some cooking and I'd mostly bring in the wood from outside. We had two animals, but they were sort of guard animals. Not in the house, they weren't allowed to come in.

Dogs?

Dog and a cat. A cat, I remember the poor thing, well, out [laughs]. Yes, yes, yes.

And a dog?

And a dog. The dog was a guard dog. Guard dog, why? Because we had the duck, we had the chickens, we had the ducks outside. And sometimes, and they had a job to do, is to guard. And they were poor things. [00:22:00] Sometimes they were attacked by rats, it was very common. And the dog came and kept guard and sometimes it couldn't, you know. It was a tough life. It was very tough, looking back on it. But I always – I was very curious, I always wanted to follow the adults. What are they doing? Where are they going? I remember it quite clearly, one night they went on hunting rats. And I followed at the back to see what was going on.

You were quite adventurous?

I was. Yeah, I was very curious, yes.

And what sort of friends did you have? Do you remember anyone from your – from those days?

Well, I had – I went to local school, the primary school. And it was mixed school, of course, not Jewish. And I remember having been in – they took me to church to see and I went, and it was all right. And we were friends, we were friends with people. My father taught me, ‘Be polite. I want you to feel that, you know, this is where we live and we’re happy and we contribute to the life here in Felsögöd.’ And we did. And we did, I remember, we were selling things, perhaps raised a bit of money and it went for the church. [00:24:05] And that was good. I was inside the church and so, we were friendly, trusting. And not sort of separate, there was no separatism. Yeah.

And what was your identity then? Did you feel Hungarian? Did you have a strong Hungarian identity? Jewish identity?

Yes. I mean, just to give you an example, my late father used to tell me, because antisemitism was always there. It might have not been so openly sort of practiced, but it was always there. So, we knew that. And my father, for instance, in the First World War, he used to tell us that he volunteered to become a soldier in the First World War. He wasn’t called up but he volunteered, to show ‘I am Hungarian.’ And then, of course, the Russians came and they took them away as hostages. And he managed to escape, because the conditions were dreadful. [00:26:00] He managed to escape from – I think he was taken. He used to tell us, and I still remember it, the names, Omsk, Tomsk, Irkutsk, Vladivostok. I don’t remember what I did yesterday [laughs], but I remember those names. He repeated it so often. And he escaped and he made his way back to Hungary. And he said, he kissed the soil in Hungary, in gratitude. I remember that clearly, that he’s got a home and he repeated it. I remember, Omsk, Tomsk, Irkutsk, Vladivostok. I remember that. Yeah.

And did you experience anti – any antisemitism as a child in...?

It – there were signs. There were signs of something coming. But who would have – who could have imagined? Who could have imagined what it – how it developed? Such as worshipers from the church threw the window in, if we had not put up the shutters, and gradually that became more and more evident. [00:28:06] And we didn't know what was going on in Germany. No idea, because we didn't have newspapers. I don't think so. There was nobody who could tell us anything. We had no idea, no idea. I don't think so. So, all we could do was pray and hope. But it was evident, because for instance, my brother loved playing football and watching it. And what happened to him? He got beaten up, coming out, coming away from the match. So, we went up to them, we complained. We said, 'Look', the local police, 'Help.' 'There was nothing we can do. Ah, they were just thugs, pay no attention.' But it started to show that there was something coming, but again, for at least I as a child, I wasn't aware. I don't know. But it gradually grew, antisemitism. Unfortunately, as I said, there was no evidence of help. Where could we go? [00:30:00] Where could we...? I mean, my uncle, I heard and I learned my uncle was murdered. He lived, I think, where my grandpa was living and not far from there, and he got murdered. And another uncle, I think, also lived – young man, younger man, got his – he was traveling up the hill in Nógrád. And somebody came with a hatchet, chopped his head in.

And killed him?

Killed him.

This was, what, in 1938?

Something like that, yeah, yeah.

And who killed him? Who were those people?

Local, a local person. A local person. I think he was tried, for two years he was sentenced. And that's – I remember that. I mean, you know, it just doesn't bear thinking about it. And things were getting very difficult for Jews there. Maybe not so much in the capital, but in the villages.

More in the villages than...?

Yeah.

Why? Why?

I've never really, I don't know why that was. [00:32:00] I mean, there were incidents and so I learned later, there were incidents where the Jews had been shot in the river. But – and there might have been other incidents for the Jews, but I really am not too much aware of what happened to them.

Your grandfather, for example, he ran the pub?

He ran the pub.

That was for non-Jews, Jews, or everyone?

Yes.

Did he manage to continue?

No.

Or what happened to...?

That, I don't know. I don't know. All I know is that we became quite fearful.

You, you became quite fearful?

Yeah, we – and my parents too.

How was it manifested for you?

Well, things were as, I explained, tried to explain, for instance, that my brother was beaten up so often. And of course, my father had to shut his little business and he couldn't practice anymore. He didn't – he wasn't they weren't allowed to have that little – because most people were self-employed. There were no – in villages. And he – and how could he support the family well? So, because he was in his, I think, about late fifties maybe. [00:34:00] He might have been. So, the only job he was able to hold was carrying a heavy load, because most people wouldn't employ Jews anymore. So, it was very tough, very tough. And then, we met somebody from Germany in the – and he was very handsome- I remember that, a very handsome man. I don't know what he was doing in Felsőgöd. But you know, he was very friendly, appeared to be friendly and we thought, they're so civilised, what...? Maybe they heard what was going on, I don't know. But maybe the children, we weren't involved. And so, I think the local council called a meeting for the men, few men and said that, you know, 'The situation is so diabolical here, we have to take them away to a safer place.' And I haven't seen my father since. We weren't allowed to use the public transport anymore. I wasn't – I couldn't complete my primary school. So, I think I was sent to a school in Vác, a school not far from Felsőgöd by train.

Jewish school?

[00:36:00] It was a former Jewish school, but that shut down very soon.

So, this is already now, we're talking about 1944 when the Germans came to Hungary?

Yeah, I'd never seen a German apart from this one man. Never seen any other Germans, yeah.

But you were saying there was antisemitism even before that?

Even before that.

Yeah. So, it impacted the community?

That's right, that's right, that's right.

And how do you remember then 1944? So, was it a grad – the antisemitism, you think was there. But then what happened in 1944, please? What were your memories?

Well, I think gradually. You see, well, I'd been – I couldn't complete my primary school. I went to this the Jewish school in Vác, it was a Jewish school and that soon shut down. So, what I remember, it was a journey on the train. I was little girl, I went to that school. And it was very, very tiring for me. I remember being carried home from the station by my father, on his back, that I remember quite clearly. And then, he found a place for me in Budapest, where Jewish students, I suppose, were still allowed. We were segregated. I didn't see any Germans. We were segregated and from the rest of the class. There were two rows of separation, but the rest of the class, we couldn't play with them, of course, in the play yard. [00:38:03] And by then, we had to wear the yellow star in the street. And gradually, everybody kept away and not knowing what to do.

This was already after your father had been taken away?

My father was, yes, my father was taken away. We couldn't use the train anymore. We knew where he was taken to. So, a Christian lady, so we cooked and baked and this, and given it to a local lady to take the food to him. And she came back, she said, 'Just as well you didn't see your father, because he was unrecognisable.' And...

And where had they taken him? So –

I don't remember the name of the place where they were taken to. Well, we couldn't see him anymore. And shortly after, we were told, the council came and said, 'Okay, now's your turn.' You know, the conditions for you is so impossible, start cooking and that's it. And now overnight we stayed up, cooked and baked for ourselves. And he came in the morning and he took us away from home. And –

Who was he?

I think somebody from the council, somebody from the council. [00:40:01] The police, might have been.

So, the Hungarian fascists?

Yes, Hungarian fascists.

So first, your father was told to come to this meeting?

Yes.

He was also told by the council, together with all the other Jewish men?

Yes, a few Jewish men. Yes, there weren't many.

And they were taken from there?

They would take from there to somewhere and we couldn't see him anymore. So, we sent this woman, you know, with some food. But he was unrecognisable by then and that's what I remember very strongly, very – you know, the effect. And so –

And your mother, how did she react?

She was speechless. She did not – there's nothing she could have said. There was no explanation that could make any sense of it. And all we knew is, be ready tomorrow morning and we'll be taken somewhere safe.

So, how much time was there in between your father being taken away and then, you told to leave your house?

Maybe two weeks. Maybe two weeks, maybe three. Yeah, not for that long. And so, that was the situation. We were obedient, what else could we be? [00:42:00] We were obedient, because we had hoped that this will blow over. Prayed and realised the dangerous times we lived in.

And this was in May '44, roughly?

I think it was in May '44, yes.

And by then, Susan, I know you were very young, but had you heard anything of Auschwitz or of any...?

No.

Nothing?

Nothing, I haven't heard anything. I haven't heard about camps, I haven't heard... But the conditions were so poor and so difficult, so we thought [gasps] it might be – maybe better if we go, yeah.

Leave Felsögöd?

Leave Felsögöd, yes. Yes, I remember quite clearly.

And what did you take from...? Do you remember what?

Oh, I took my sewing machine. I'm a little girl, I take my sewing machine. I thought well, wherever we are it could be useful. Sewing machine on my back and the food we made for ourselves. And my mum and my brother. And my grandpa died long before that. And my uncle, I don't know where he went, we lost count.

The four of you?

Hmm?

The four of you, or the three of you?

Three of us.

Three of you?

Three of us.

And where were you taken?

At first, have I already told you we were taken to Vác? I went to school. Yes, you did.

That was before but tell us again. So, from the beginning.

Yeah. Well, we were – I was – that's right. I must have told you about Vác, because my father was still at home. Yeah, so that's –

So, first you went to school in Vác? Jewish school?

In Vác, yeah.

But then, your father was taken and then you were again taken to Vác, with your mother and brother?

[00:44:04] I think so, I think so. That's a bit hazy, my memory.

Was it a ghetto?

Yeah, it was a ghetto.

So, when you were taken, you actually were taken to a ghetto in Vác?

To a ghetto in Vác.

And what do you remember? What were the conditions there?

Well, just the food that we brought. We weren't there very long, a few days. From there, we were taken to another camp, another place not far. And we were sleeping outdoors, that I remember. We were sleeping outdoors, again just for a few days. There was a guard on the top of the hill and a lot of walking. I remember that, carrying this sewing machine.

How did you manage? That must have been quite heavy.

It was diabolical. It was absolutely impossible, I don't know. I don't know how I managed.

I mean, you were fourteen at the time?

Yes.

Were you strong? Were you quite grown up or...?

I was, I wanted to help. I wanted to do this and we were sleeping outdoors. Yeah, there were – ah, there were queues. And we, you know, my brother and myself, we were curious to join.

What are they giving there? What's going on? But nothing was true, that if we convert to Christianity, we won't be taken away. But it wasn't true.

Did some people try to convert them?

[00:46:00] I don't know, I really don't know. They might have done perhaps, I don't know. Verbally, I don't know. But so, there were queues. I think what it was, bread will be distributed but we never got any, nothing. So, we slept outdoors. And a long walk from there, a long walk to do the trains. The trains, cattle trains. And because we were only women, children. Men were taken away before and the voices became harsher and stronger. And, 'Do this and do that. Get in.' And the problem was there were two buckets, I remember that, two buckets for I don't know how many people. One for drinking water, one for toilet. But of course, they both spilled and we were sitting on the floor, straw floor. Children were dying and crying and we became speechless. We realised we were trapped, we're – and the whole lies that we'll be taken somewhere space – somewhere, safe place. [00:48:00] We realised this is not going to happen. But what is? We didn't have the imagination, the knowledge. So, the train moved and crying of children became quieter. They were dying. We stopped occasionally; nothing was going on. We continued. It took a long time to actually, for the train to stop and it did. And shouting, "Los, rein" [get in], what's going on? What language? What is this? So, we scrambled out. Many would – many of us died on the train. And I remember clearly that somebody came and whispered, who could speak Hungarian, and said, 'Don't say you're younger than fifteen years old.' I was reasonably tall for that age. So, when the German officer, I think he was officer, 'Wie alt bist du?', 'How old are you?', I could speak a bit of German, 'Ich bin fünfzehn' [fifteen]. I held myself straight. I didn't know, what am I...? [00:50:00] And my brother was two years older than me. Strong, strong guy. 'Stand here' for me, 'stand there', my mum. So, there. I later learned where my mum was sent. She was very worn and tired, and unable to do any work. So, she was no use. I didn't know, until we were taken to a barrack. My brother was taken away. My mum was sent to the gas chamber, I learnt. But I didn't cry, because I was frozen with fear. I was frozen with fear. I was taken with a group of kids, girls my age and dropped the clothes that I had, that I'd worn. Dropped the bags that I had, I had some bags, I think. Maybe that –

The sewing machine?

The sewing machine-

Did you still have it when you arrived in Auschwitz?

No, I wasn't able to take it anymore. No, no, the sewing machine was left. And hair shaven, clothes dropped and it was cold, freezing, freezing. [00:52:03] We arrived somewhere unfamiliar and were taken in Auschwitz. Separated from my brother, of course, separated from my mum. And the barrack was only about my size of people, of girls. Only girls.

All Hungarian?

I think, yeah, we were all Hungarians, because we couldn't speak to each other. You couldn't speak, so we whispered to each other in the barrack, whispered. And trembling, fearful, fearful. You couldn't – if we were lucky, we got some breakfast, you know, something to drink, that was breakfast. And what happened there? I wasn't there too long. What happened there was – and we were every morning, of course, we were counted. We stood there, sometimes for hours to be counted. Of course, how can you escape? I mean, it's unfamiliar, it was unknown to me. And but we were counted, how? Stark naked, stark naked. Who was that? Dr Mengele. [00:54:01] And counted, looked at our bodies stark naked. And I didn't care, I was frozen was fear. I was terrified. I just didn't want to be seen and I didn't really care anymore for life. So, they selected me, 'Stand there.' I did. I wasn't condemned to a gas chamber yet. They – I suppose I was still able to do some work, looking at my body, do some work. So, I was sent on a train to a place called, I can't remember now. Guben, Guben, I think it was.

Guben?

Yeah. They had a factory, they had a – it was quite good. They had a factory there and I was shown what to do, and I learned. I don't know what I was doing, but I did it. And as the allied forces were coming closer, we were, all of us, were sent on this march, the death march in the

winter. No clothes, hardly any clothes to wear. And that's what we marched, with many soldiers, you know guns. And there were of course, the lookouts on the top looking. There was no escape. I mean, where could we escape? I was an ignorant kid. And so, we marched, it was bitterly cold. We didn't march through towns, but we marched through fields and hear the shots when they were fired. Or when the kids my age couldn't keep up with it. If we were lucky, I think a few times the farmer gave us some food, or we scraped for food in the frozen fields. So, we just marched, a long march, a long march. Frozen fields and finally, I see a big – a big, big metal door, double doors. We are somewhere, I thought. So, we got into Bergen-Belsen, place of death, diseases. [00:58:00] And remarkable as it may sound, in the barrack where I was put, I mean, there were all rotted bodies. And so, I crawled out. I wasn't able to walk anymore. A crawled out to the next barrack and who do I see? My former neighbour, Jewish woman.

From Felsőgöd?

From Felsőgöd. She recognised me. 'Are we going to survive?', she said. And I said to her, 'Yeah, just hang on, hold on a bit longer. Things will work out.' But I had to go back to the barrack, because their former prisoners and woman wanted to occupy it. And the following day, I could see the lice all over her forehead when I crawled back to see her, she died. And the lices [sic] would carry the diseases. And so, that was typhus and tetanus and all the diseases I could think of. We were infected with – most of us died. And I realised that and I crawled out, I crawled out. And in the green- on the green, in the field I wanted to die there, I suppose. [01:00:06] And I feel a pair of hands gently picking me up, placing me in a warm place. A miracle and it was a British- a British soldier. They set up this remarkable – I met – after liberation, I got on my feet when it was – got on my feet, I said, 'What put that goodness into your heart that you could actually...? You made yourself vulnerable for us.' But they offered they to set up in a small building, it wasn't even a building, just a small couple of rooms, they had beds and – although I remember fainting couple of times. But I was given food. And somebody came and said, this woman said, tried to explain where I might be able to get help. And I just nodded, I had no idea. I mean, I was totally ignorant. And she said, 'Sweden.' I didn't even know that Sweden existed or what. [01:02:00] And so, not long after I was moved. I think I was – the Swedish sent in some – where you put the boat. You

couldn't walk, so had to be carried. And I was sent to Sweden, a place which offered me and others a place of rescue.

Susan, before talking about Sweden, because I want to talk about Sweden, let's just go back a little bit. Where you were taken from Vác, from the – you went – was it the prison camp? Or where were you kept there? Was it a ghetto or prison camp? Or what was it?

Well, Vác had a Jewish school, that I remember.

Yeah.

But it wasn't – I don't know much about Vác. Really, I don't remember much about – although I did go to school there for a week or two. I think it had at one time a big Jewish population. Probably they all had been murdered.

So, they used it as a centre people were taken to, so that the deportations were from there?

I think so, yes. Yes, yes.

And just to come back to the deputation and your arrival in Auschwitz, what – you were fourteen, what did you feel suddenly being exposed to this?

Nothing. I didn't have any fear, I had no emotions. [01:04:00] I did not have – well, in Vác, I mean, I still had my mum next to me, she never spoke a word. There was nothing to say. What explanation can you have? And my brother was also numb. So, we were just sort of doing what we had to, what we were told to do. And appear to be – and be good and obedient, and that's all we wanted. We had no energy to retaliate, because there were these big – great big, tall lookouts.

There was no – there was nothing in that situation which could be done?

Nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing. I mean, how could we? Where could we have been saved? You know, there was no escape and who would give us food? You know, this long march, this long march.

Later, but how long was the journey? The actual journey that from Vác to Auschwitz? Was it a few days or...?

From Vác to Auschwitz? Well, from Vác, from – wait a minute, where was it? Let me just get my memory clear. From Vác I think it was this short stay. We were told to leave Vác and we marched to- somewhere else. I can't remember now.

Right.

Yeah.

And from there you were deported?

[01:06:00] We were taken to Auschwitz.

And was it a day or two days on the train, do you know?

No, it was longer.

Longer?

It was longer. It was longer, was it probably a couple of weeks, must have been.

And how many people were in that, in your wagon? You said they were mostly women and children. How many roughly?

I think I didn't really – we were sitting or lying down, because it was weeks before we arrived. There might have been maybe fifty. I mean, I'm just guessing. A lot.

And people, you said, died on the way?

Many, many died. Certainly babies, certainly children. Because I don't remember hearing cries, because nobody had the courage, the energy to cry. And it was just a slow death, that's what it was.

And when was it? Do you remember roughly when was it when you arrived in Auschwitz?

In Auschwitz those few of us who survived, we were kind of glad to arrive somewhere. We were, I think I certainly felt, oh, we've got somewhere. And so, we were told, 'Leave your stuff behind you and wait.' [01:08:02] And then, the selection took place and you see, the 'me-me' was long gone. We were not human beings anymore. We were reduced to being animals – maybe more. That's how it was. We were just – no feelings. No awareness of me. We didn't exist anymore.

But do you think that not feeling is also some mechanism of survival, in a way?

I think so, I think so. When one knows that there's no help and there's no help, there's no hope. Even that, I mean, hope and – I mean, that was gone. That was gone, that was gone, hope. Yeah.

Susan, did you meet – you said you were with other Hungarian prisoners. Did you meet any other prisoners, other nationalities when you got to Auschwitz, do you remember?

I think they were, yes. I mean, in Auschwitz, in the barrack you couldn't speak. Just whispered, because there were some – there was a guard. A Jewish woman, mostly.

A couple?

A couple maybe. Yeah, I think that's what I learned. [01:10:00] So, incredible.

Unimaginable, really? Yeah.

And when you're under such inner fear, even the fear goes somehow. When hope disappears and you don't ask God, because where is God? And just, it was the end of life, the end of life that you can't – there is no way out.

Did you think at that point that there was a chance of survival or...?

Well, no, not anymore. Not anymore. So, when I was told by Mengele to be standing there, I wasn't alarmed. I wasn't fearful, I didn't – although I heard about the gas chambers. And I learned that my mum was in the gas chambers. And it was just – I was totally without any comprehension, no comprehension. There was no hope, there was no comprehension. What is going on? Why? No, no whys, no – everything was shut down with me. Yeah.

And this – that Mengele selection where you were taken out, what was it? He was checking who could still work? [01:12:01] It wasn't for the medical experiments or...? Because that –

No, I didn't know, of course. We – I didn't know the thing with medical experiments.

You were not exposed to any medical experiment?

No, no, I wasn't. No, no, no, I don't- no.

So, you are selected to be strong enough for work? Or those examinations were...?

Strong enough for work for a while and- I suppose – but we got food. I got food, so I could do the work I was shown.

So, in Auschwitz, before you were sent to Guben, what was your – do you remember that daily routine?

Just standing quietly and looking to – we were on the first level. I think there were two or three levels in the barracks, it wasn't just one level. So, we looked in disbelief and we looked at it in a totally ignorant – you know, when you have no – your mind doesn't produce any – the mind also needs to be fed. Well, we weren't. So, the mind needs some comprehension, some questions. No, no, no, it was just vacant, vacant, vacancy. Yeah.

[01:14:00] Do you remember some – from your time in Auschwitz, do you remember any other prisoners? Or did you form any bonds with anyone or...?

No.

Were you just by yourself?

No, no, I didn't. At first, when I was first – when I learned what happened to my mum. But again, I wasn't alarmed. I wasn't alarmed, I wasn't that I remember. I wasn't alarmed to hear my mum was sent to the gas chamber, because I was in a different – I was in a world which somehow, you know, doesn't make sense. It doesn't correspond to anything I knew. And is this a story? I couldn't even ask those questions. Yeah, couldn't ask any questions because that needs some intelligence, some questions, some understanding. No, I wasn't a person anymore. I wasn't a human being.

Yeah, it's dehumanisation completely. Yeah.

Yeah. So, that's what I remember now. I see myself as a sort of a shadow, just a shadow, reduced. You know, joy has long left my life. **[01:16:00]** And there was an occasion, I think it was in – it was some – where could it have been? I looked up at the sky and I saw the sun on one occasion, and somehow, I don't know, have I interpreted it that God is looking down? But I don't know whether that is something that, you know, I recognise now, or did I think of it that way in those times? That I don't know.

So, did it come as a surprise when you were taken to Guben when they you were selected to become a, I mean, a slave labourer?

By then, when I was selected, there was no – one would think you would, you know, realise, oh, I'm being selected. Well, there's hope, there's this. No, I was a robot. I was a complete robot, with no sentiments, with no feelings, with no hopes. No, no, that was just a robot and life didn't mean anything. Yeah.

And how many – was it mostly women who went to Guben? How many people?

Not many of us, not on that occasion. I remember who was selected. There weren't many of us, no, who were selected, no. [01:18:04] But I suppose, you know, one could explain that perhaps they – maybe their thinking perhaps was more alert than mine. Just nothing mattered anymore, nothing mattered, no. I was reduced to just an unthinking piece of wood.

And did the situation improve once you started as a slave labourer, for you, or...? When you arrived in Guben, did you have any contact with civilians in that factory?

I – yes, yes. I mean, not that I could speak to anyone. But I had a routine. Get up in the morning, that was the routine. Get up in the morning, get dressed. And the work wasn't very far. So, it was just doing what I had been told and that's all I knew, just a routine.

What sort of factory? What was it? What factory?

I think it was – it was, you know, I don't remember it so clearly. But it was some sort of – what could it have been? Something to do with armaments, small bits, pieces somehow to sort things out.

What did you have to do? What was your job?

I think that's what I was asked to do. They showed it to me, nobody beat me up. [01:20:01] So, I just always nodded in agreement. And I don't think anybody was supervising me. I was – when I had been told to do something, I did it if I could. And I was willing, of course, because really, I wouldn't object to anything. No, no.

What was it? Did it have a name that factory, do you remember?

They never explained what it was. No, they wouldn't explain it to me. They didn't explain. I don't know what it was. It was pairing up little bits or something. Maybe that's what it might have been. Couldn't have been complicated. Probably there was some bunch of pieces that had to be sorted. Maybe that's all I might have been capable of doing. It couldn't be complicated, I don't think.

Were there German civilians in that factory working?

There were.

And did you have any contact with them?

No, no, no, no.

What about the food condition? Did that improve?

It improved, it had improved. So, the reason is, of course, that I could continue work. I wasn't there very long. I wasn't there very long at all. No, no.

And then, you were taken on the death march?

On this death march.

To Belsen?

To Bergen-Belsen.

Yes. And how many people...? Sorry to ask you the question, it's difficult to answer how many people, but everyone who worked in that factory? [01:22:02] The Jewish prisoners, then they were all sent on this march?

On this death march, yes. We were, yes, sent on this march. I don't know how we survived, how anybody could survive. Conditions were so dreadful.

And how far is...?

A long way. It was a long walk, a long walk, a long walk. I think occasionally, my memory is very poor in that respect, I think there were one or – once or twice, a few times, when we had – at first, we could just sleep in the barn. You know, the farmer's barn, I think. But I'm not 100% certain if it's just my imagination. I don't know.

And did some people managed to escape or run away or...?

I doubt it. No, there was no place to escape. Maybe some had tried, I don't know. But I don't know anyone, didn't know anyone. Where would I go? Who would offer me...? And very obedient and did what I was told. Yeah.

And Susan, on the march were you together, do you remember? Were you together with other people?

Yeah, but I never exchanged a word with anyone.

You didn't speak to anyone?

No, because I didn't know anything. I didn't know anything. Where? I don't know, I don't know.

So, you really went through all this by yourself?

On my own, withdrawn within myself. [01:24:00] Yeah. No, you couldn't – because if you had been found to be talking to someone, you would have been shot. We'd been told to do – and that's – that was their way, making sure that you follow. Yeah.

And when you arrived at Belsen, so that was late... I mean, was it...?

Yes, that was the end of my incarceration. Yeah.

But by what time did you get to Belsen roughly?

I don't know, I think weeks.

Belsen was liberated on the 15th of April, right?

Yeah.

So, did you get – did you have like a month in Belsen or a few weeks?

No, no, it wasn't that long.

Less?

I don't think, much less. Yeah, Belsen was much less. It was – I remember, as I said, I remember having faced up to seeing my next – my neighbour dead. And I wasn't there very long, the barrack in Belsen. No, I couldn't have been very long there.

When you arrived, the conditions were very bad?

Yeah, conditions were all – bodies all over, dead, yeah, rotted. Rotted bodies in Bergen-Belsen, yeah. Totally rotted. I heard some – I heard shouting. Oh, I think shouting when the – finally the liberation came. [01:26:00] But it didn't mean anything to me anymore. It didn't

mean anything. I think those who were strong, perhaps they could reasonably perhaps work it out. Ah, we're free.

But you couldn't? You had no strength?

I couldn't think of it, no. To me, it didn't matter anymore, no. No, Bergen-Belsen was a place of death. Yeah.

And Susan, all that time, did you have any contact with your brother? Did you know where...?

No, I haven't seen him. I saw – when I was in Sweden, after a short while, I think it was the Red Cross actually, who collected names, survivors. And I read on one of the papers that – my brother's name. And so, I think he wrote to me, 'Don't come back', because the Russians occupied- there. And his job was also, what was he doing? What he was meant to do was going into the gas chamber and taking the bodies out, and threw them in. Yeah. And for the gas chamber and the crematorium, I mean.

And was he all the time in Auschwitz? What was his experience?

I never discuss much with him. He was very badly affected. And I brought him out. [01:28:00] When we moved here, my husband, my husband, we moved here and only then – how many...? It might have been six years in Canada, in Toronto. And of course, I didn't have money to bring him out. He didn't have – I had to pay for his trip. Maybe ten years later, I saw him again, brought him out. There's nothing that could help him. No, he died and I went out to the funeral. Yeah.

Yes.

That's how it was.

Yeah. He got married and had a daughter, and she lives in – not a Jewish woman. Didn't marry a Jewish woman, but she was a lovely woman and she also died. And a daughter. Yes, got married to an Italian, an Italian guy. I don't have a close relationship, unfortunately, because you know communications, all she wanted – I had no money. I had my children young and that's all she wanted, really. She needed money, money, money the whole time. So, I said, 'I'm sorry, but I can't. I haven't got it.' So, she lost interest in me.

So, your brother went back to Felsőgöd?

He went back to Felsőgöd and into the house. Somebody moved in immediately. What happened? He told me afterwards he – as soon as we left the house, all the soil was dug up, to see where we hid some valuables. **[01:30:14]** I think that was a reason. And so, they moved in and he had to pay these people out who moved in. And it took him many, many years because he worked. And he, you know, I wanted to bring him out, but he couldn't anymore face living anywhere else. And so, he got married very nice, very helpful woman.

He stayed there? And he moved? Did he move back to your house, to the family's house?

Yes, he did.

So, he lived there?

Yes, yes, yes. And in fact, the house, I've got a picture of it somewhere, what happened to the house was –

Did anything survive? Anything of the belongings?

Yeah. Those, can you see the – that, that? As a child, I was –

A mortar, is it?

Yeah.

What do you call it? Yeah.

Nuts, they had to be –

Mortar and pestle.

You know, chopped.

Yeah. That's from your house?

Yes. And those were the – just behind him is another little bronze, brass.

And how did that survive? The neighbours took it or...?

Yeah, they took it. And when my brother moved back and the neighbour brought back, I don't know, did he have to pay for it? [01:32:00] I'm not sure. So, I got it. I –

Okay, show us later.

These are the only two things I've got from home. Yeah.

Susan, I think we should have a break before we move on to Sweden. Is there anything else you would like to add just on this part of your story?

Well, look, I'm grateful I'm alive. I'm grateful that I could survive with an enormous amount of pain. And also, the Swedes were helpful actually, in creating – that's what music does to one's life. Music, that was my recovery, help.

Looking back, was there anything you think which helped you to survive these terrible experiences in Auschwitz and Belsen?

I often repeat it now in my quiet times, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He raised me down in still waters. Who will ascend to the mountain of righteousness? Only those with clean hands and a pure heart. I repeat it to myself in my little prayer. We walked away, there was no revenge. We walked away, we didn't commit any crimes or hate or anything like that. And I'm glad we did not. We just walked away and hoped, perhaps we can somehow build a life, just a little life. I got married when I was eighteen. I'll tell you about that afterwards.

Okay.

Also, a survivor. And as one gets older, at least for me, in – what is it? I mean, I was fortunate that I had, I was able to have children, my own children. How was that? [laughs]. And it's difficult for the children as well, to have two survivors, parents, because well, for obvious reasons. So, it doesn't just stop, things go on in life. And the memory comes closer, sometimes. And so, I've done – I became a Samaritan and that was very helpful to me. I also taught my children, I used to take them at Christmas time, we'd go to this hospital or that hospital, and relieve the staff from serving tea. [01:36:13] We would do it and that I found, for me, is very helpful.

To help others?

To help others. Be kind. It's very difficult for the children, of course. That's another long story.

Okay, I think we'll take a break now and continue to talk about it.

Okay.

Thank you in the meantime.

Thank you. I'm going make a cup of coffee.

Susan, now let's go back and talk about liberation or what happened after liberation?

Well, the liberation, yes, I've heard shouting in Bergen-Belsen. Shouting, because then I could hear what's going on. 'We are freed' and all that. I couldn't understand what it means. But anyway, it was gradually sinking in, what happened to my family? That is what was predominantly my – very much in my mind then. And having learned that my brother survived, there was a bit of a hope in my mind, because I had the children very young. I got married at the age of eighteen. And two years later, I started having children. [01:38:00] We were very brave and wanted our families, wanted our families, wanted our children. So, we had so much to cope with. No money, no nothing, but we coped, we coped. Very frugally living, I didn't get – no one was helpful to us in financially. And as it happened, my husband, my late husband worked two shifts. And he learned his – he came from – my husband learnt his sort of knowledge about jewellery manufacturing, jewellery casting. [Phone rings] I'll just – so, where was I?

You were talking about your life with your husband.

Oh, my husband.

But just to go back, I just would like you to tell me a little bit about your – we want to find out your journey from – after you were liberated to Sweden.

To Sweden?

Yes. So, you said you were picked up by a British soldier and were you taken to a hospital or what?

That is unforgettable in my mind, when I was picked up, to this moment. And I had befriended a number of British soldiers who had liberated Bergen-Belsen and they, I think, they are my real heroes, who liberated after such a long battle. [01:40:02] And yet they retained that kindness, that helpfulness. It's – I think that remained as a force for life.

As a positive?

As a positive force for life.

What do you remember? The feeling of feeling safe or what? That –

As a – that goodness, kindness survived. That after such a tragedy and violence, violence that I had, and all of us experienced. Goodness, kindness, and helpfulness is one of the driving forces for a life. As we get older, we realise it more, I think. And –

And how weak were you at that point?

I couldn't walk. As I explained earlier, I crawled out and I realised that I'm going to die. But it was on the cards for me. And then, this gentle hand, kindness. And how was that possible? That this, oh, this force or this kindness force, had not been affected after so many battles that the British...? [01:42:03] And many other countries, let's not forget that. The Canadians and the Americans, and many others had fought. So –

Did you get in touch...? Because I know, you know, we've interviewed somebody who came in with the British Relief Unit, Helen Bamber, as a nurse. Did you meet anyone from the British Relief Unit or...? Apart from soldiers, in that time, in Belsen after liberation.

After liberation? Somehow, somehow, I think looking back on it the tragedy of my life had sort of receded itself. And I began to understand that there is a goodness in the world. And I think that is what gave me that hope of improving my life. So, we had the games. I've got a picture of it.

That was already in Sweden?

That was in Sweden.

Just before that, how – you set you heard the name Sweden was mentioned. Was it – was there another option, or were you – just did somebody's tell you? Why...?

I didn't know where Sweden existed. I didn't know that Sweden was a country. I didn't know anything about Sweden. [01:44:00] What are you talking about? [Laughs] And –

And do you remember the journey from...?

I try to understand, I try to remember the journey. I think I – because I couldn't walk yet. So, I think that I have might have been taken on a stretcher and it wasn't a long journey. It wasn't a long journey, but I made it.

Was it on a boat? On a train? How did you get to Sweden?

I don't have much recollection, because I was in a daze. I think I thought it must be a dream, a fantasy, a fantasy that people cared about me. And I suppose it might have been, I feared that the picture will disappear. I didn't go to – I didn't completely understand liberation myself yet. It had to come gradually.

And roughly, when – was it a month later? When were you taken? When did you go to Sweden?

I went to Sweden very shortly after liberation. Very, very shortly. I remember that. And because we – because in that little – it was a little room where they placed me after liberation. [01:46:02] That was still in Bergen-Belsen and the beds had blankets and it was warm. And I remember the face of, I think she might have been a doctor. And she tried to explain that I'll be taken to Sweden. And I had no idea, Sweden, what is it? A country? I couldn't work that much out. And she was testing me, this – I think she was a doctor, and I fainted. I couldn't walk yet. I couldn't walk, but it didn't take long. And I remember sort of very remotely, that I had been taken on a stretcher somewhere. She asked me, do I want to go? And I responded, 'Yes.' Totally depended on her kindness. I don't know, I mean, it might have been, it must have been actually, it must have been on a boat, because – on a boat. But it was a short trip. It was a short trip. And then, there were a few of us, a number of us who were taken. And

some of them were not very friendly, I remember that too [laughs]. I remember, I recall that.

But –

[01:48:01] *Why? Why? What did they do?*

They were shouting. Then I was fearful. But, you know, it didn't take long to realise that gradually, very gradually, I couldn't work out that I survived and my family did not. That took – that would have been too much to contemplate on. And gradually, gradually it sank in very slowly, very slowly- what freedom is because I was very dependent. Completely dependent on others. And so –

Were you given clothes? Clothes to wear, do you remember?

Yes, yes, I was given clothes. I don't remember what the clothes was, but I had nothing. I had nothing. And there was some food, some clothes sent from the neighbours who lived around there. Shoes were sent so I could walk outside and then meeting up with others. And that was a new experience too. So, all that took time, trust.

To build up trust again?

Yes, yes. And I must admit, as I said earlier, that it wasn't a great friendship, hugging yet.

[01:50:10] I think anger and fear ruled for a while. But I had – I remember I had a very good friend, turned out to be a wonderful person for me. And I couldn't cope with larger groups, but individual friendship, yes. That was wonderful.

Who was that? What was their name?

I don't know what happened to him.

What's her – him?

No, it was her. It was her, sorry. It was her. She had explained, I remember that she was going somewhere with fam – with her family whom she found. And I was a bit upset losing her. So, trust and affection took a while.

And what are your memories of arriving in Sweden? And what meet – people did you meet when you got to Sweden?

Well, I didn't – I could not work it out yet. I could not work it out that there are people who are so, so helpful. But it took a while, not all that long. It took a while. And amongst us, as I tried earlier to explain, there was anger too. [01:52:00] It had to come to the surface and recognise it. And then, realise that was abnormal, what we had.

What was the ages of the people you were with?

They were older, they were older. The angry ones, I think. They were somehow, if I'm correct saying that, but they were angry. And – but I became friends with this lovely, lovely person and she found her family.

What was her name, do you remember?

I don't remember names anymore.

And so, were you one of the younger ones? Because obviously –

I was one of the younger ones, yes.

I mean, I know that in Belsen there was some child survivors, like very young ones. But probably in your generation, you must have been on the young side of –

I was young, I was young. I think my survival, I think, perhaps was assisted by the fact that that I was in a daze. Not so much anger, but in a daze. And that was so I wasn't sort of involved. Yes, I knew what was happening to me, but the anger – the anger wasn't there.

There might have been a little bit of hope, perhaps. Certainly, when that British soldier picked me up, that was a kind of, like I said earlier, reawakening and hope, hope, which took a long time.

[01:54:22] One of the things I actually was going to ask you earlier, was when you described that you had to stand there naked, you know, every morning that you were examined, whether you think it was a different experience to be a young woman in the camp, than to the male experience? Whether you felt – [phone rings]. Yeah so, I was asking you whether you think it was that the women were more vulnerable? Specifically, you as a young woman in Auschwitz and Belsen.

The women?

Yeah.

I can't answer that. I mean, I just became a robot. I just became – I was fearful. I did what I was told to do. I had no regards for myself and, you know, I just did what I had been told. So, I didn't have an opinion and I don't have today. It was what that – the circumstances I was in, I suppose. That's what dictated my feelings, because deep down – [automated message from the phone]. **[01:56:00]** Oh, telephone line, okay. That's good. Yeah.

But you said gradually in Sweden you built yourself up again?

I did and that took – it also took a while. The me, what do I...? [Automated message from the phone] It's again, I'm coming back to this girl whose I had a picture of her and I don't know what I've done. But we became friends and she left, she met someone. I forget exactly the reason why she left quite soon. I missed her terribly. I missed her terribly and I still think about her occasionally. I never befriended the other survivors that much. They were older and I think they were – sort of had a harsher nature. We were – had felt vulnerable.

But you said you didn't like to be in big groups. You didn't like the groups?

I didn't like, no.

You only wanted individual –

Yeah, that's right. Individual and you know, and close – understanding with each other somehow. She understood me, the little bit I could share with her and –

Was she Hungarian as well?

I don't know. I forget what she was, I forget. [01:58:00] She must have been. Yes, I think most of us were Hungarian born. Yeah. I still miss her to this day. But what replaced this rebuilding, this rebuilding my emotional life, my inner emotional life, was music. Because very shortly, very shortly after the arrival to Sweden and being placed in a former school, away from the local people, we were isolated in that sense, was playing – listening to music every night. Every night, this wonderful, youngish man from, I think Jewish, I think either from Germany or from Vienna... She had – he had a very big collection of music and he played, and he played to us. Lights were dark, lights were shut down, we were in the dark. And we learned, or at least I learned, that I had an inner life. [02:00:00] And that inner life was strengthened by listening to the music, because Beethoven understood me. Somehow the beautiful, lyrical music was there and one. And the darkness [sings notes] and it kind of opened up like a flower. And so, night after night, we played music, he played music to us.

Recordings or he played?

Recorded.

Recordings?

Recordings, every night. Every night he played recorded music and I learned to listen, because I didn't have it in my childhood. And so, that is what music has done. It opened up my own inner life, my spiritual life, my hopes, and my – and somehow taught me a bit about life. That kindness does win at the end.

And what was it? Classical music?

Classical music.

Only classical? And what did he play apart from Beethoven? What...?

Well, he played all the Haydn, Beethoven. [02:02:00] We didn't play Wagner, but we played modern as well. And joyful music, lyrical music and he didn't explain anything. Maybe the year that the composer lived in. But you know, Hungarian music as well. So, a wide variety, wide variety.

And Susan, was he a fellow survivor? Was he a teacher? Or was it somebody from Sweden?

I kind of began to like him very much. I felt a kind of, oh, you know, new feelings kind of came into existence in my life [laughs]. You know, youngsters and he was in his twenties, I remember that. I travelled with him on a train. I can't remember where he was going. I went with him somewhere, I don't remember. And it was a lovely feeling and –

What was his name? Do you remember the name?

Yes- I don't remember his name, unfortunately. He passed away, because I had been in touch with someone, I think in Sweden, who knew about that camp that we stayed in and –

What was it called, the camp? Do you remember the name? In Sweden.

Yeah. It's – I've got a picture. Wait a minute, I've got the name of the place. [02:04:00] Let me just see. Oh, here it is. Yeah, the name of the place where we were living in, Ribbingelund.

How do you spell that?

Ribin, R-i... I think this is how you spell it. Ribbingelund. Lund, Lund. Ribbingelund. But I don't remember his name. Years later, I tried to trace him but I was told he died.

So, tell us a little bit about this Ribbingelund.

Ribbingelund was remote from – it was a – just purely – was purely just to house us, and offer us peace and kind of finding yourself, in a – you know, just finding yourself and looking around in that natural world.

And was it a hospital? Or was it a place?

No, there was no – no, I don't remember actually being treated. My treatment was based on just walking, slow walking. Being fed with good food, listening to music every night, gentle. [02:06:00] That's what I enjoyed very much, a peaceable existence. An existence where I could walk on my own if I chose to do so. But I had a friend and although she left long before I did, she gave – she had – made a very big, deep impression on me. Friendship, trust, sharing, being understood. Yeah. And so, I gradually, gradually, I still miss them, gradually –

Here's the photo.

Yeah.

Here's the photo.

Was she here? I can't remember what she looked like anymore. But then, I learned to exist contently in – within a group as well.

It took some time?

Took some time, took a long time.

And so, did you – do you remember seeing psychologists? Were they...? I mean, who? Doctors? Who did you see then?

I didn't see any doctors. I – no, interesting, I didn't see any doctors. We had had visitors; we had had visitors. Like I like for instance we've had a shoe repair guy. [02:08:02] I remember he sent us shoes. Sometimes they didn't even pair up [laughs]. And –

A local person?

Yes, Swedish.

Just a local shoe repair person from that town? Was it a town or was there...?

I don't know where he came – where he lived or... I had no idea. We've had – I had been invited several times to – well, I certainly had been to a Christmas celebration. I remember marching. They had a wonderful Christmas celebration and I was part of it, happily. And somebody, occasionally we had visitors from other parts of the, I think it was from that place, Ribbingelund. And I was invited about twice or three times. She was a hairdresser and that was very nice.

Invited for tea or...?

Invited there. I think I might have slept there. Yes, it was very nice. But that sort of, I don't think – I appreciated it very much, but it wasn't my home. It wasn't my home, like I had this girlfriend. You know, someone who I didn't have to explain. She knew what I'm talking about.

You had a similar experience?

Similar experience.

They didn't, yeah, that didn't understand.

No.

I mean, people – could understand where you had come from?

[02:10:00] No. No, they knew where I'd come from, but to have lived through all that, that really needs time, and needs time and somehow understanding, for feeling, you know, not as a stranger, but as being one with the other person. It takes time, it took a long, long time. It took a long, long time for me to strengthen my own needs. And I did – I was very grateful to be – I enjoyed being part of that march of that Christmas celebration, but I wasn't at home. I wasn't at home.

You felt, you felt it?

Yes, I felt it.

And was there any contact with the Jewish community in Sweden?

None. None at all. It wasn't really – it didn't really matter. I think it was the closest with humanity. Or was it just my own fear that perhaps this wasn't going to last too long?

And what was – were you sent to school there? Because were you – how old were you in...?

No, I wasn't sent – maybe, I think we did have a brief period actually, for learning. I think, but my recollection of that is very limited. No.

So, was there a sort of daily routine? Or was it free?

There might have been some learning, because I think we probably had come from different backgrounds. [02:12:04] And my recollection of that is very limited, so.

What language? Do you remember what – which language was spoken?

I think the language was Hungarian. Most of the survivors were from Hungary in that Ribbingelund. And I think the difference, I think it's at that age and after that experience, I think for me having found someone who went through the same experience, I think was very valuable.

A shared –

A shared, a shared nightmare. Yeah.

Because I'm thinking, you know, when I listen to you, I think of The Windermere Children. You know, who were taken to Windermere together and it sounds a little bit like that.

Yes, similarity. Yes.

You know, where people were out of context in a beautiful, remote place to be together.

Yes, you cling to your – to the people who understand, who had been through it and who are of the same sort of fright. And you don't need to explain, because you know that you're being understood. Yeah.

And also, what you said towards – that you had feelings towards this person with the music. I mean, of course, it also meant you were teenager when you got to Auschwitz. So, you lost in a way all your – that bit of growing up.

I lost – that's right. I lost my youth. [02:14:00] And youth where you, you know, you can kind of feel free to do what you might want to do. And because I suppose it was always, it might have been at the time, fearfulness that maybe all this will disappear one day. So, feeling secured and reasonably – not just secured, but reasonably content, takes a while. Takes a long time, takes a long time. And even that, even that – these feelings had had to develop, trust and had to develop. And I miss that, of course, that – I miss that. That being understood, how lovely. How lovely when you've got a home, and you're being loved, and

you're being considered, and you mattered. What a great feeling. And of course, I didn't have anyone.

No.

Yeah.

So, when did you find out...? At that point, you didn't know exactly what happened to your parents?

I didn't have much hope actually, I knew what happened to my mum. I also knew what happened to my dad, because – though, I mean, I hadn't had it confirmed. [02:16:04] But I think I was still living with my mum, and we realised that he's not going to survive, learning it from the person we sent out and taking some food to him.

What about your brother? Did you hope – what was your hope of...?

He told me not to come home.

But when you went to Sweden, how shortly afterwards did you find out that he had survived?

Well, I learned actually his survival, I learned it while I was still in Sweden. And then, a *shaliah* from Palestine came and –

A missionary?

A missionary, thank you, and you know, encouraged young, energetic people. Well, I wasn't a subject for that.

To go to Palestine?

No, no, they didn't want me because I wasn't strong enough to do much labour. So-

So, was there an element of, I mean, Zionist youth or a Zionist movement in this – in – within the – it wasn't a camp, in Ribbingelund?

Ribbingelund, yes.

Was there a sort of Jewish education or...?

Nothing.

No.

Nothing about any religion, any form of religion.

But Zionist?

Only when this woman came and – because it might have been possible, actually, to go out to Israel and...

[02:18:07] *Hebrew?*

No, not a word. I never knew – I never learned to speak Hebrew. And because in my little village, you know, women, girls weren't taught, from what I remember, to my great regret. And so, that wasn't on the cards for me.

What about Swedish? Did people teach Swedish to the children? Or was it more – was it clear that it was just a transitional place?

Yes, yes.

Was it clear to you?

I didn't sort of speculate too much about what will happen, where will I end up? I didn't know about Canada, of course. And I mean, some people remained in Sweden. Nobody said it's possible and who would I know there, again, being on my own? My brother informed me, 'Don't come back to Hungary', so where could I go? I'm just on my own. That oneness, aloneness. And then, going to well Canada, somehow it emerged, I don't know, we were told that we could go to Canada. I didn't know where it is located, what it is. So, that aloneness was a driving force, aloneness. [02:20:05] The realisation, where do I belong? Where do I belong? So, they took me to Canada and that's where I met my husband-to-be.

Meaning, were the other options you had?

Not that I know of now.

No, so somebody said it's a possibility to go to Canada?

Yes, had to go somewhere. Canada took us in and I said, 'Yes, please.' And so –

Where were you taken to?

We were taken to Toronto. And at first for about, I don't know, maybe three weeks we stayed in this home together. And then, placed individually with people, with families. I was placed with a family, a Jewish family, and had given a room with his family. And I became a kind of a Communist, because they were Communist and the Communists were very friendly.

Where was it in Toronto? Where?

In Toronto.

Where?

I don't know exactly, where. She took me and then she told me, she says, 'Oh, somebody', you know, 'I found a husband for you.' Husband? Why do I need a husband? [02:22:01] It was a big joke, he was a butcher, I think. [Laughs] I forget.

The family?

No, the family, there was a son there and a daughter, who wasn't very friendly to me. And I felt the loneliness there very much. The daughter wasn't friendly at all and the son was studying the whole time, of course. And then, it was a problem, of course, these – you know, going occasionally to these meetings with the Communists could present a huge problem, living in Canada. So, we cut that off. And, later on, I met my husband-to-be. And because they found a job, they found a job for me. I mean, I had no education, nothing. Nobody suggested, 'Ah, you could learn to speak English in the evening classes' or whatever. No, nothing and...

Was there an agency who helped? A Jewish community or...? Who organised this?

I don't know to this day.

Even the trip, how did you...? Did you fly? I assume you flew, a boat is probably too long. Did you fly to Canada? How did you get there?

To fly to Canada? I think we – I think no, no, it was a boat.

A boat?

[02:24:00] A boat took us.

So, it was in '47?

Yeah, a boat.

So, was it a boat via New York, America, or...?

I think so.

Any recollections?

I've got all the details, actually. My daughter investigated how, you know, the few survivors arrived in Canada. I don't know.

So, you remember the journey or...?

I don't remember much about it, that journey. Just looking around the windows and seeing what's going on [laughs].

But you were with some other people from Sweden who you knew?

I think so.

Were you a group?

I think so. I have very little recollection from that journey, very little recollection to this day, no. Nobody could – there was nothing to communicate about. You know, wait and see.

And did you have any English when you arrived?

Not a word, not a word. Old, old – [inaudible] hopeful. Ah, well, you know, there are evening classes. No, nothing, no. After being in this home, I suppose some Jewish organisation might have paid for it for a couple of – three weeks maybe at the most, we were placed with a Jewish family and a job was found.

And what job was found for you? What did they find for you?

In a factory where, what did I have to do? It was miserable time for my life. [02:26:00] I had to do something, some simple thing in work, some work in this factory. I can't remember, what did I do there? Maybe I could, you know, I can still remember the – but I couldn't use the electric sewing machine. I can't remember, something to do with sewing, something to do with sewing. And I was the only girl, couldn't speak a word of English with the others. There were some other people and they had formed themselves in a group. And laughing, 'Oh', you know, 'she's...' And that went on for a while, being on my own and excluded.

Outsider, an outsider?

An outsider. Thank you for the proper word. An outsider, yeah. An outsider.

So again, there was probably not enough, no understanding of where you had come from.

None whatsoever. And I remember I worked – oh, yes, I met my husband and he found me a job. What was the job? I can't remember now. And oh, yes, I learned my English actually, by listening to people. That's how I learned the language. And then, the daughter of the boss said, 'Oh, could I come and visit you.' [02:28:00] 'Oh', I said, I understood, I said, 'Please, do.' I didn't have any money to buy any food, but that's by the way. And then, she cancelled me. I can't tell you how unhappy I became, having invited – you know, she's the boss's daughter. Having been – and then, she cancelled it. I felt very shameful, that I remember. And it was difficult, it was difficult because we felt, like you say, the others.

What was your husband's background? How did he get to Canada?

Well, very similarly, he went back. The majority of the people who had the good health, reasonable health, went back to see who else survived, so did he. And he learned he came from an Orthodox background. And he learned his trade from having been in- stopping in different cities, because they didn't have money to pay for the trip. And so, he learned his trade there in, I think, in Belgium and Holland and –

Where was he from?

From this Orthodox background. I think Wisznice [ph], something.

Poland?

No, no, he's from – he's Hungarian, so he was Hungarian speaking. [02:30:00] And of course, Yiddish. A few years older than me, but he doesn't know himself, he didn't know when he was born, because it wasn't registered [laughs]. You know, I may have told you that. That was, you know, non-kosher food to eat, no way. And so, they didn't register him and then, he continued learning his trade, that trade in Canada.

And how had he survived?

He had a terrible time, it's surprising he managed to survive, because he was quite a strong fellow. And he was working on railways and many of them died. So, how he managed to survive, I don't know.

Had he any relatives left or was he...?

Yeah, he did have relatives and quite a number of relatives, but again, they had different experiences. They went back to Transylvania. This – I can't remember the name of the place actually; it will come to me. And many of them left and, you know, left his family, left. They got married and then they left, sort of someone to Israel, I think, you know.

And he came to Canada?

And he went to Canada, yeah. So, that was it. He went to Canada and he learned some more, and some more facets of the trade and... [02:32:10] But he was – I was a bit of a serious person and he was a quite- the opposite. And so, that was good. And again, he became very aware of his – of missed – necessity of living in a modern world. So, that was a big disadvantage, being in – you know, how do you live a modern life?

You mean, in terms of religious observance?

Yeah. But he was – we became more worldly you know, not so religious actually. I was more prone for religious life.

You were?

I was, with years to come, with years to come. I mean, not sort of excessively but, yeah.

But you got married very young?

Very young.

And do you think...?

I've got the picture there.

Okay, with –

There it is, my daughter painted a picture, my husband and me [laughs].

Oh, I see. Okay.

Looking up to the sky, there is a little rabbi at the back.

That's lovely. We're going to look at that later, but –

Yeah, holding hands. [02:34:00] 'Do you want a ring?', he said. 'No', I said, 'it has no practical purpose, a ring. I need a watch, if anything.' So, I got a watch [laughs].

I think we – Susan, I was just talking to you about, you said to married early. And one of the thoughts I had was just, many other survivors married young.

Did they?

Yes, I think so, because obviously to have family.

Aloneness, aloneness. I mean, I'm open and honest about it, being alone and around some good feelings emerge. And you know, there was no kind of big deal, sexual all this. Yes, but that wasn't what drew us together.

What drew you together? A common...?

Helpfulness, helpfulness. I think that's very important to life.

You knew that you could help each other?

Help each other. You're needing each other, helping each other. Yeah. And also, he wasn't a strict man, he was a kind of fun, enjoyment. You know, 'Let's go for a dance.' 'Okay.' Honest, open and you know, that's –

Okay. Yeah, honest, open.

Honest, open. Admitting it here, you know, a good listener. And same here, same here. [02:36:01] Good listener and appreciation, appreciation. I'm not denying there were times- but I think it's the modern world that kind of, you know, being aware of what you need and what you want, that's important. It helps one's self-esteem too, in a modern world. But I think, what I think more than that, I think deep down you do understand the other person's tough times, either within himself or the world outside, whatever reason.

And did it help you?

It helped me, it gave me strength. So, it gave me the driving force. It gave me the driving force. I – you know, he opened up his little – because I mean, he couldn't even write and read

in these Hasidic families, it's not – it wasn't unusual. I did that, so you know, it makes we feel good.

So, what did he open? You said he had a shop or...?

No, he opened up a fact – he learned more of a metal caster. And they weren't very good here in casting. So, I'm travelled. I mean, no wonder my kids really might have missed me very much.

You were doing selling or...?

I was doing selling. I went to America. Got up at six in the morning and I knocked on doors, door, door, door. [02:38:07] I took back some dollars, back home. I went to Scotland and Ireland and... They said, 'Where are you from?' I said, 'I'm from Canada- from Britain.' 'Oh, you've never seen an English person?' and a woman on top of it. Big deal [laughs].

So, you were – you worked in the same...?

I've worked – I was selling. In the office I was doing not as – I probably made a lot of mistakes, a lot of mistakes. But in the evening, I went to go classes.

And had children also quite young?

I had the children. Poor children, looking back on it now. Was I a good mum? I've still got problems with that [laughs].

But it wasn't important for you? Did you want to have a family?

It was important, it was important. I realised, look, nobody gives you a penny. I'm sorry I'm talking about money, money, money. But you know, when you don't have it, 'Give me a penny.' You might, you know, sit on the street. So, I had to be – I had to grow up very quickly. That's what it was. Grew up very quickly.

And where did you settle in Toronto, the two of you? Where did you live?

I'll tell you what, luck, I think. You got – don't ever despair. I said to my husband, may his soul rest in peace, I said, 'Look, don't work. Don't go to work today.' [02:40:05] 'But there's not a Shabbat.' I said, 'Stay at home, I've got to get out', because the children were sleeping on the floor. I said, 'I've got to go and find a place', because he had one room in South Kensington, somewhere. And we slept there for a short time. And I said, 'Stay at home, look after the kids. I'm going out to find a place.' I got on the underground, it stopped. I see a sign and there it says, rooms to let or flats to let, or whatever it was. But difficult times for families. And got out, when in. I said, 'Look here', see, I'd heard about the problems finding a place for – renting a place to a family, because you could go up to the council and complain, and they had to reduce the rent. So, nobody wanted to, not many people wanted to let a place to families with children. And I said 'Look, I'll look after your place like my own.' He says, 'Well, we were going to go to Africa', because they were getting good salaries there for what they could do. 'But very soon', and so it worked out. It was luck, because at first, he wasn't interested. I was at the door, I'm not exaggerating, at the door. I wasn't despondent and his phone rang, and he beckons to me, 'Come back, come back, come back.' [02:42:01] 'Okay, I'm back.' He says, 'They're going and they would be interested to see you.' And so, I assured him. Nice to let a room here and we fixed up the basement, a little house in Hendon. And I let a few rooms and that's it, kept the place clean, tidy. That's how –

That's in England?

That's in England.

But in Canada, where did you live in Toronto?

In Toronto, no, I didn't have the children. Yeah, I had the children towards the end. Well, that's when my husband was here a year before I joined him.

So, where did you live in Toronto? Do you remember which part of Toronto?

Yeah, it was in Bathurst Street, or Bathurst and Bloor somewhere. Yeah, up on the top attic.

And how was that?

It was all right, yeah. With the children, mind you, the children were – by then we – in Toronto, we had a – I shall never forget it. We bought a place with two big mortgages, a letting place, letting rooms. And that's how we started; it was tough. Phew, cold winters. It was near an airport. It wasn't expensive near the airport. I used to go out with a broom. 'Oh, go away, get away' [laughs]. Flying aircraft.

Did you join a synagogue? Were you part of a community?

No.

No?

No, we didn't join a synagogue. [02:44:00] No, no. Even here. What did we do? He didn't – my husband didn't join a synagogue.

So, you lived there for six years and then, your husband came to England for work?

My husband came to England, because somebody had an idea to open up some place, sort of a retail shop. And but he changed his mind in the last minute, so... But anyway, he was on the way here and it took a year. I think he had come home a few times. But I had the children, so my mind was concentrating on the kids.

And did you want to move back to Europe or you...? What did you feel at the time?

When?

Well, you said you were six years in Canada. So, we're in the mid-fifties, in the fifties, did you want – did you feel you wanted to come back to Europe?

I never occurred to me. I had my children and that's what my interest was, you know. I didn't know about Europe. I didn't know about... I didn't want to go back to Hungary.

Yeah, but you didn't mind coming to England?

I came to – we came to England. Yeah, yeah. I'm content by living in England. I couldn't go to live in Israel, because I was hopeless for any work then.

Did you – sorry to interrupt you. Did you have Canadian – did you get Canadian citizenship?

I did, I still have it. I've got a Canadian passport, I'm bilingual, and a British passport that I have.

[02:46:03] Mm hm. But do you think, was it a bit, on your husband's side, that you wanted to be...? Was it purely for work? Or was it that you felt it was better to be in Europe? That's what I'm trying to understand.

Well, the reason why we had – we wanted to move, because Canada at that time, you know, it's a capitalistic country. Jewellery casting and any form of practice, anything to do with manufacturing, it's very seasonal. And the workmen, what did they do? What were they told to do? After Christmas, 'Take your tools, and go home. We'll let you know when we need you.' And this was quite common.

So, he didn't have enough work?

Well, he was unemployed a lot. Yeah, he was unemployed a lot.

So, this was an opportunity to come...?

We took it as an opportunity as to come away. Well, we have another opportunity also, to travel to Winnipeg. We went to – again, looking for work for my husband. He was often unemployed. You know, that trade wasn't very – it wasn't a constant. It wasn't secured. You know, you work for someone, listen, he's not there to lose money over you. And so, that was another big problem.

So, when you came to England, did you know anyone here?

Not a sausage. Nobody. [02:48:00] No, we didn't know anything. We didn't know anywhere. It was pure luck that I found a little rented home in Hendon. Perfect place.

The place you just described where they went to Africa, yeah?

Well, this couple went to Africa. Yeah.

So, this was because – so you relocated again? So, you'd come to Sweden, Canada.

Yes, but you see, there was a purpose. When there is a purpose, you do things and there, everything is sort of seasonal. There are times when you need this, there are times when you need that. Just like now, people travel to – they get a better salary in America, or Australia or wherever. And then, that's how we operate, unless you inherit a business from your parents.

Yeah. So, you didn't mind leaving Canada to come to England?

No, I didn't mind.

You were not attached? You didn't...?

No, no, no, I didn't feel there was – I mean, if there had been more of a security, I suppose, then I would have been... It was a wonderful life in Canada. It was a wonderful life for many, many people. And it depends, many people remained, you know. We didn't, maybe because of his career, because of his work and – or his lack of education, or whatever it might have

been. So, you just have to go kind of play it according to what's the current situation of your uses, I think.

[02:50:08] *And was it better for your husband in England, economically?*

Yes, although there were times he did, you know – lack of education was – it would have been a very helpful, very, very helpful, kind of strengthening of his character to some extent. But it wasn't to be, it wasn't to be.

And did you continue working with him in England or...?

I did, I did. And mind you, he was very good in his trade. We used to travel. I'll tell you, it's interesting. We used to travel to Italy, to see – because they're very creative, the Italians in jewellery. More than any other country was, I don't know what it's like today. And we did go several times and got the patterns, because you can't be good in this and not good in that. You can't be good in everything in manufacturing. So, that was very helpful in his occupation, having kind of copied and recreated certain patterns.

So, just give us an example, for example.

If you've got time, I could show it to you. **[02:52:00]** I'll show you. How could I show it to you? I've got –

Just tell us, in terms of jewellery, what does it mean or...?

Yes, I'd have to show you.

Not now, because we're –

Next time if you're interested in it, I'm happy to teach you.

Okay, just tell me roughly what you mean by like in a –

Well, what is it? You make – somebody has to create the first piece.

Yeah, is it the design or...?

The design.

Right.

But they were very good in designing. Now, the British were, you know, not like that. Anyway, okay, maybe some were, but anyway. So, the design, so the Italians, we used to travel to... And then, recreate certain parts because they can – because the British design is more conservative.

Right, so what...?

You know, the Americans like something big and showy, and all that, you know, in design. But some parts you re – and you can recreate certain things according to the culture of the country you live in. Bearing them in mind, but also do it a little bit different, you know.

So, did you sell the jewellery as well? Did you sell the jewellery?

We were selling, but in order to cast, metal casting, you'd have to – I would have to show you. Metal casting today is quite different, they're much more advanced. But in those days, casting meant you made a piece, you had to make a rubber mould, a rubber mould piece.

[02:54:03] And then, there's so many different aspects to it. Let me just think, how do you make a piece of jewellery? How do you cast it in those days? I don't know about today. You made the first piece and then, you had to make a rubber – you had to – the piece has to be cast in. Then you had to make a rubber mould. And that rubber mould, you could make many, many copies.

I get it.

It's a fascinating career actually, how to make jewellery.

So, was it to cast for stone or for...?

Yeah, well, not for – without stones. The stones you put in afterwards. And you'd have to work at it for a while to understand what's going on.

Anyway, but you were helping him?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes, yes. We were together, we needed each other, because he was good in making, I was good in tock, tock [laughs]. I think, reasonable.

You managed together.

Yeah.

And Susan, what – how different was it being in England to Canada, being a survivor? Did you find fellow survivors here? Did you find it...?

Well, the people were – yes, everything depends very much on your home life, on your background when it comes to business. And you learn, you know, you learn from your childhood, from your family a lot. And all your friends or you know, somebody had inspired you maybe. I could be mistaken, I don't know. [02:56:02] But I would say your home life is important. And if you are a musician, so you were inspired by your family. You heard music. And it's your home environment that's very helpful. Well, I mean, I don't know. But you adapt, you adapt. But I, you know, I liked learning and that's what was my enjoyment. Imagine my big daughter taking me, wherever the picture is of me, sixty-years-old [laughs]. Crazy.

So, you went to university when you were sixty?

I went to this polytechnic; it became a university after.

Yeah?

Yeah.

And what did you study?

Modern European history. Don't ask me why I chose it- I was no good in maths.

You did the BA?

Yeah, got a BA. Yes, yeah.

And you had three children, three daughters?

Yeah, unfortunately, that one passed away, cancer.

Yeah.

And –

And Susan, what sort of identity you...? So, you raised them in Hendon, you were living in Hendon. How did you want to – what sort of identity did you want to give your daughters?

I don't know. I didn't even study, later on I studied psychology. I don't know. I – well, first of all confidence. And I was always very much for a practical life [laughs]. **[02:58:05]** Be practical. And one of my granddaughter's, one of my daughter's actually was a – she went to a – I might have told you.

Go on.

Have I told you this?

No.

No, tell me or correct me. Anyway, she wasn't good at school. And my eldest one, yes, she was all right. She went to grammar school, you see. But I didn't even know how to help. How did she become – how could she go to grammar school when she had ignorant parents? You know, we weren't good in maths or English, anything. She went to – because someone said, 'Ah, why don't you give her some tutoring?' 'What? Tutoring? Who? Where? How?' 'Yeah, here.' I did it, I sent my – because families don't – people don't always speak about what they do for their own children. They do it, 'It's private, it's private, I don't want to tell you.' And she went to a – yeah. She had – she went to a grammar school. No, she went to a summer in the tutoring and she came out with a first class. Sometimes you have to help your children, you know. I mean, if you have the knowledge, fine. And if you have a very trusting, good relationship with children, you know, children don't always listen to the parents, far from it [03:00:05]. So that help was very good and it was just by pure luck that I learned about it. So, she learned, but my eldest one has got problems, anger. She's kind of – whether she's a first born, I don't know, or what – there could be so many other reasons as well.

But Susan, did you join a synagogue? When you lived in Hendon, did you join anything?

I think I might have, yes. We used to go to – well, first of all, I didn't go because I had to be with the children and –

But your husband went to something?

And also, we didn't – well, it was mostly me. My husband wasn't in favour of... I think we were a bit, in all honesty, looking back, I was a bit fearful. Even the naming of my children, Joan, not Jewish.

You were fearful to be Jewish?

Yes.

So, you chose non-Jewish names for the children?

Yes, Diane, Joan, Joan, Joan of Arc. I mean, no other – you don't hear anybody, any Jewish girls being named Joan. It needs some security, you know. There's always a reason for everything.

But I mean, in England, I mean, there were other Hungarian survivors came post-'56. Did you find other survivors from Hungary? Did you have friends with a similar background?

[03:02:00] Well, I mean, I find, quite frankly, even today, generally speaking, people are very private. And quite rightly so. You know, very private, they live a life, private. Certain things you don't talk about and perhaps they feel – perhaps that has changed over time, I don't know. But I think, it was that way at the time, and my eldest daughter, and I don't want that to be –

So, don't say anything. Don't say anything, because it's difficult to –

No, no.

Yeah, yeah.

Nothing about my children.

No, exactly. Yes.

Because they would kill me. It's not for public notice.

Okay. So, let's change the subject in that case. Tell us when – because you are one of the most prolific Holocaust educators in this country. You're very well known. When did you start talking about your experiences?

Thank you. Well, in my case, I spoke about it when I had noticed – well, first of all who helped me to become a bit more alert and more secure, is... Not that I was well integrated in the society here. No, I wasn't, I wasn't. My first friends I would say, had been a social worker and I'm the best friends with her today. [03:04:11] But she's in a home. She's in a Jewish care home, doesn't live at home and very much in difficulties.

A social worker from...? She was a social worker? For which organisation or what – who did she work with?

I think one of the Jewish carers, the Jewish care.

Okay, and she became your friend?

My best friend. My best friend and I visit her every week. And I – she was my guiding light.

What is her name?

Shirley Samuelson, my guiding light. And not only was she wonderful to me, to us, she had an open home. But she made such a difference in everything I was doing.

In which way, Susan?

The trust and a freeness. By that I mean confidence, sense of belonging. I had friends, gradually, friends of my daughters, their parents. But most of them were sort of, what can I say? Most of them were occupied with their own lives, yes. [03:06:13] It's a very complicated, very complicated story. How do you integrate into a wider community? It's very complicated. First, you've got to feel good about yourself. And then, the realisation of understanding the other person, and working towards that too. Sharing and being a friend, knowing what it is, how to be a friend. First be a friend. It's very complicated. How do you integrate? Or can you integrate? Because normally, you keep to your own people.

Yeah, when you come from outside, how do you...?

When come from outside.

Yeah.

Having an open door to –

But she helped you, Shirley?

[Whispers] Amazing.

How did you meet her?

She was from Ireland originally. She had – she married this lovely, lovely guy. None of this-
you're not advertising it? We're not...?

Yes, it's on tape. So, don't say anything too – if it's too private, then don't.

It is very private.

Then don't say it.

No, no, no. I wouldn't want you to, you know –

No, so then don't. Anything –

I don't want you to talk about other people.

[03:08:00] *Okay.*

It wouldn't be right.

No, just how it's relevant to you.

Wouldn't be right. I would have to – no, no.

Yeah, just how it has helped you. You can talk about that.

Yes, yes, my help. I mean, she was enormously helpful. My dear friend, she was enormously helpful. She was so honest, open, honest and had spoken about her own difficulties in life, which we all do. And with such sincerity and such – and she was so kind and she was so understanding, and she was so helpful. I keep saying those words again and again.

She gave you, you said, confidence? Because I asked you about when you started to talk about your own experiences.

Yes, yes. And I didn't have to speak too much, she knew, she knew. And so, yeah, a great treasure in my life.

So, how did it help you talk, or for the...?

Well, now, I speak all over the world.

So, how did it start? That's what I want to find out.

Well, very important, first of all, I had the approval of my husband. After all, I could have gone – I could have, I don't know, done at home... I don't know what people do with themselves. Of course, you've got children. My children were approving, 'Mum, what did you get?' They were hanging out the window, waiting for me to come home. And 'What do you get for me?' [Laughs] Oh, yeah. And the opportunity to speak to the world. [03:10:00] And how did that come about? Well, what was the name of that...? Organisations allowed us, encouraged us to come forward and be prepared to talk.

So, you said the Spiral Institute?

The Spiral Institute, very good, very, very good. And I became a Samaritan. Nevermind, the religion, people, we've all got similar needs. And that's what gave me confidence, helping others.

And you feel that your experience has helped you to connect to other people?

I think so. Having been there, knowing the difficulties that perhaps the children have with their parents. And I think learning from each other, learning from each other I think is very important. Not necessarily to – I mean, I've never considered – my religion is Jewish and I value that and I want to learn more. Here I am, ninety-three years old. I'd like to learn more about the meaning of the weekly portion I do. And it's a good life, it's a good life.

But Susan, did you – before you started talking publicly, did you talk about your experiences to your husband and to your children? [03:12:00] Was that talked about? Or there was no time really?

No, no, you're quite right. There was no time no time. It's a little bit of a – I wish there had been. I wish there had been. I think the value and the goodness of having an extended family. I did have someone, because for instance, talking about having – talking about games, and books, and things like that, somebody sitting there and reading, how wonderful that might have been. How wonderful. And you know, my children did not have it, of course.

The aunts, the uncles, the grandparents, their grandparents?

The grandparents, yeah, yeah.

So, did you feel that very much when you had your own children? That missing out on that?

Well, I did. I mean, I didn't allow myself too much feeling of – you know, negative feelings, because – no, that's very important. Nothing about my children, nothing. Good children, very important to say. Lovely children.

Yeah, we were talking and Holocaust education and...

The Holocaust education, yes. I think it is, and I'm very glad I was able to do it. I had to feel reasonably good about myself in order to.

[03:14:00] *Yes, so how could you do it? That's my question also. In what – when you start talking, how do you protect yourself in a way, from getting retraumatised every time you tell the story, for example?*

It wasn't my doing. It was put out in the open, antisemitism. It was – it's been long ongoing. It's nothing new, antisemitic opinions. No, do I think that I singly, I'm not the only one, had had devoted so much time of our lives to show how a word, especially Europe, Europe we're talking about, had become in partnership.

And when did you start your first talks? Was it in the eighties? Late eighties or...? Do you remember your first talk? When did you give your first presentation?

Well, perhaps, I would say about forty, forty-five years ago.

Forty-five years ago?

Yeah, forty-five years ago. I don't know exactly when that was.

Well, it's now '23. So, yeah, eighties. Early eighties –

Yeah, so I did. And of course, the opportunity was there, because there were people who you speak to. You know, the schools had to come in, they had to be notified, they had to be

communicated with. And you can't, one person can't do it, there were many – well, there were a few of us, a few of us who did that.

[03:16:00] And how do you feel has it been for you? Did it – do you think talking helped you, talking to the younger generations?

I definitely think so. I think he's been very helpful to me and I feel reasonably good about myself. Having been able to do something that perhaps has worthwhile consequences.

And do you feel, from when you started talking today, did things change, the way you tell it? Or do you feel you've adapted yourself? You know, do you know what I mean? Do you...?

Well, I try to combine it actually with was human nature. You know, it's the big me, me, me, yeah? 'I want what he's got. I am...' You know, 'I want to do that.' And of course, now, well, for some time we got the church on our side. And I mean, here I was yesterday, and we got Bet Shalom, remarkable, remarkable. And what they had achieved, and I used to go there quite regularly. It's a long journey. But we did it, many of us, many of us. You can't do things on your own so easily. So, I think we have done... **[03:18:00]** I must speak in plural, because it took a good many of us to have achieved, to have achieved. We had the people who know the system, the willingness, the – their determination. We became partners, yeah.

And Bet Shalom also started thirty years ago.

Amazing. I remember Marina, blessed her. Yeah, remarkable. May her soul rest in peace, yeah.

Yes, it's very important for so many survivors, Bet Shalom.

Very, very, very much. So many good people. So many good people who are devoted and there's so many things that has been done. And they're covering a large area. You know, Nottingham and further up north, and the whole country actually is well – you know, it's integrated.

And do you feel it needed some time for the survivors to be able to speak? Because – or that people didn't want to listen at the beginning? Or both?

Well, I suppose it varies from individual to individual. Some people had that need and it's been very helpful. And some may not perhaps, I don't know, I don't know. But they were helpful in other ways. There are different ways of helping.

Of course. [03:20:00] And when you talk to schools or to organisations, what is your main message? What do you want to tell?

That where – let's – I said, 'Okay, I understand how you think, but tell me. Why? Why? Give me some reasons why there was that Jewish hatred for so long. And what has motivated it? Speak it openly.' And so, let them find their reasons. And I think it's – at least we tried, at least. I don't know what the result is. Like I said earlier, you know, that sort of self-interest is very powerful. But then, other ethnic groups also had huge problems. So, we learn from each other.

And Susan, how do you feel about Holocaust education or what it has achieved? And maybe really today, I have to ask this in the light of recent events in Israel, and when you see the demonstration here in London, and how does it make you feel?

Well, extremely sad. Extremely. It's an indescribable feeling. I mean, I don't know enough about the politics of what is going on today. [03:22:00] So, perhaps in a year or two years later, when we are – after a thorough investigation, you know, and openly and honestly show the true reasons. Who are these? Who are these terrorists? And how can they adjust their lives by killing so many? It's just indescribable. Just indescribable how they can live their lives. Because like I said before, who will ascend the mountain of righteousness? Yeah. So, let all the good people pull together and speak up, and speak up. Nothing violent but keep it alert. Yeah. And know the truth, know the truth.

And do you feel that for survivors or descendants of survivors, these sorts of, just watching these things on screen will retraumatise, will bring up all these feelings?

Well, I mean, long ago, long ago, I mean, we moved away from barbarian actions, where children had been burned in the name of religion [03:24:16]. Or a belief, or whatever it is. We're civilised. We're able to negotiate. We're able to talk to each other. We've not moved – no way are we moving back to this barbarian period, which really was the way people lived their lives, until we had some religious teaching. So, there's a lot to be learned, a lot to be learned. And I hope the learning will come soon.

Yeah. Susan, how do you think your own experience has impacted your life?

Well, I except – I have no – I really, I don't have – I have – I'm cautious, alert. I have no interest in any, you know... Terrorism is terrorism. It's not explainable anymore in this world and I think we must accept that. [03:26:04] And you can't claim it's my religion, because it is not, because it is not.

You said before that now getting older, sometimes the memories come back stronger, your memories.

Yes.

Do you find that to be the case?

Well, the memories of missing what – I mean, let's interpret it openly. Memories of sadness, memories of human needs. What is the deepest and the most honest needs, is we all want to, should want to help each other. There was a time when those living in Gaza worked beautifully together, beautifully together. Yes, they might have been the odd ones. I don't know, I don't know anything about that. But peace, peace is some – is a belief that strengthens our right to live together, to support each other and use no violent actions. That is barbarianism. That is just an ancient form of some violent, indescribable actions. [03:28:08] So, just for those they want – but for their families, for their children, yeah. So, I mean, I am

– I find it indescribable what they have done on such a large scale. I find it indescribable that such violence and such hate and such destruction, should be in any form or state, in any nation. Because those who speak from helpfulness will win at the end anyway.

You remain optimistic?

I do. But unfor – sadly, whilst that truth will – is accepted wholeheartedly, we need to speak, we need to teach, we need to remind people, that do not let that... Worse than animals. Animals kill to eat and human beings, how can that be accepted? We have a system of justice. We have a system of teaching people about decency and mostly helpfulness.
[03:30:14] Raise yourself above those dangerous thoughts that somebody had put into your mind. Just think, because one day your place will come.

So, that was – I wanted to ask you about your identity because you – obviously you were born in Hungary, you moved to Sweden, you moved to Canada, you came to England. How would you describe yourself today?

Vis-à-vis Hungarians, you mean?

Vis-à-vis your own identity.

My religion, I am well integrated. I am not for separatism. [Phone rings] I am not for separatism, I'm integrated.

Yes, what were we...?

Anyway, I'd welcome if you edit it, remember what we're talking about.

We're not quite finished, we're not quite finished.

Oh, okay.

I asked you about identity.

What is my identity? Yes, my identity. Who am I? I am integrated within the society I live in. I – that's important. Treat others as you would want others, just my ten commandments. What is my ten commandments? Love your neighbour. You might have had problems. There might have been disagreements, just like in any family there are certain disagreements at times. [03:32:05] But no space for hate, hate, because we know what the consequences could lead to when you allow hate and separatism. No, we all should be, and I hope and... [Phone rings]. And that is what all religions should teach and they teach. And do what you can for each other. Help, be gen – be kind, be... Yes, there are times when you get impatient, of course. But violence, never. Raise above that violent urge that you may have inherited from who knows. And unforgiveness, that is unforgiveness, because a system of justice and you know, killing and even – and hurt and any form of inhuman action, is very hard, very harsh against those who still – few of them who practice.

And Susan, have you – we didn't discuss it, have you been back to Hungary? [03:34:00] Did you visit Hungary to see your brother or...?

I had been visiting my brother many times, several times, but he passed away. And you know, I've met some very decent, kind, helpful Hungarians. I'm missing my family, my childhood. I'm missing those carefree years, of course. So, in my age now, I'm looking for a quiet, quiet, peaceful place. And so, going back to Hungary, I mean there are- it's a beautiful city, Budapest and many places there. But I just want a peaceful time. Those early memories are not easy and so, it's okay. I know I've got some – many Hungarian friends here. And nice, happy, decent, trustworthy people. And things have changed, there's no question about it. But I don't know enough. And you know, in my old age, I've got a bit – a few years left. I want peace, I'm working towards that.

[03:36:00] And Susan, what was it like when you first went back to Hungary? What was it like for you to go to...?

I enjoy it. I love the Hungarian culture. I love their singing, their dancing, they're happy and you know, they're light-hearted. That's how I remember. And many, of course, many other things but times have changed. And look, I don't know enough about politics and I don't – I'm not a politician. I don't want to involve myself in it. So, that's how it is.

And what about Germany? How do you feel about Germany today?

Well, three o'clock. Germany, I think like most terrorists, like most, it – their own people were killed. What they had done is inexcusable. I mean, totally, totally unacceptable, totally. And – but I think like most, violence comes to an end. It will always come to an end. It's not me, what I think. I believe in God. I believe in justice, I believe in speaking to each other, accepting our views. [03:38:07] And those – and what is going on now is just- stop it, stop it, stop it. It will come to an end, in your memory, in your mind to remember. What about your children? What will they say? Irrespective of how you brought up your children, it was violence. But they'll not follow your way. So, there a lot of work to be done.

How do you see the future of, let's say, Holocaust education? For example, I know that there's a play based on your experience here. Somebody made a play called 'Kindness'.

Kindness. Kindness is a much stronger – that's all it wants to say, is a much stronger human behaviour. Kindness, it will always accomplish.

Who chose that title? Who chose the title for the play?

The playwright, yes.

But you like it?

But I like it, yeah, 'Kindness'.

And what do you feel about it? That suddenly you see your life there on stage?

Well, look, it's well accepted. It's a way to put it – I mean, we shudder at the thought, at any action that highlights violence and injustice and all that. We shudder, because we moved on. [03:40:02] Yes, it's taking a long time, I know, I know. And you wonder, will it ever change? I don't know. But we're working towards it, and so should many countries. And nowadays countries stand up, stand up for decency. And you know, violent behaviour in the long run will – it is now unacceptable in this world.

Do you sometimes think about how different your life would have been if Hitler hadn't been...?

Well, I might have remained a little, I don't know, brought up in a village. And women of course, those who had money I suppose, they could live a life you know, well educated. And, but then again, I always say, whoever invented the washing machine, whoever invented – look at how far we've gone in washing machines, in dish washing, in a heating, in having heat, central heating in the house. It's incredible, in a short while, relatively short while. That's what made the change. And not even speaking about the communications. And many, many advances that we – that the technicians and then scientists had done. [03:42:06] It's just unbelievable. I mean, I hadn't – yeah, having a – what it is called? The hand, you know, you call someone.

A phone, phone? A mobile phone?

Just a phone, yeah. I still have to learn [laughs]. Remarkable, remarkable what we have achieved. Yeah.

And Susan, do you feel your history, or the history of the Holocaust, impacted your children, your grandchildren? Are they interested in this? How do you feel it is the impact in general terms?

In general terms? Well, of course, my children often asked, sometimes asked, 'Why don't we have grandparents? Where is your family?' I – yes, they know. But no one is – I don't talk about blaming. That's for them, that's for them to think about if they want to. And stand up

and speak loud and clear about the reason, about the purpose of life. I think that's what – that's an important thing to do. The purpose of life, it's very short. You reach a certain age and your working capacity or learning capacity is not that long. So, make the best of what you can of your life. And how nice it is to think you've added something, because that is what creates a good will. [03:44:11] And not only here, but in the world to come. So, I think that's the way we should think, the world to come. I'm happy that we walked away, and I try to... Forget, you can't, because it's ingrained in the mind. But build on it and say, 'Terrorism is not for us, not for any of us.' And believe it or not, I think we created a better world, despite all that. But we have to answer what we have done. And so, remember, and create a good world for everyone. And we're all different and that's the interest. One works, one is good in whatever, we're all different. We're different ethnic groups, which it makes it interesting. So be glad of it and learn, we learn from each other. And some things we have to answer. [03:46:03] We have to answer how we had been given this life and what a great gift it is. And that's why I'm grieving for this terrible, terrible thing that the terrorists have created.

Yeah.

Yeah. So, I think here we are.

Is there anything else which we haven't discussed, which you'd like to add?

No, I think I've spoken about learning to live together. I think that's important. And the kindness and goodness.

What about living with the sort of trauma which you experience?

The trauma, it's, I don't know, I am traumatised. I am deeply traumatised that we have such people living some – and such innocent, killing innocent people. What are you doing? What are you doing? And I hope that some of them, some of his people, unless they escaped, they had – they will be answerable and learn how to live with all of us together. And pay for their violent actions, because enough is enough. [03:48:07] That's all I can think of.

And, Susan, I know you have – you gave us already a lot of messages. But anyway, is there a final message for anyone who might watch this interview in the future?

Well, I think people will perhaps realise whether we are – you are Christian, you are Jews, we are I don't know, Muslims, or others, it's not religion. It's your anger. It's your violent nature that you have to correct. That is what's created this and only you can change it. And if not, the government or whoever, I don't know, I don't know... Otherwise. I don't know. If you can't live in a decent world, then this world is not for you. Because I would say we are all traumatised, having really followed what took place recently. And I am hopeful, I am hopeful because it will happen, it will happen. [03:50:00] And there are various ways to do it. And I think it is for all of us to use our system, which is justice. We have to teach how to live in this world peaceably, so that means to all the governments

And thank you so much for that. But also, something we didn't ask you is, of course, you got an OBE for your work.

Yes.

And not only an OBE, you got – I'm looking at, what is that on top there? The recognition from the –

Freedom of the City.

So, how does it – how do these awards make you feel? Do you...?

It makes me feel good. And that wasn't for being Jewish or not Jewish, that had nothing – that's to do, what have you done while you were alive? While you live in this world. And how did you – how did me move away from just the big, 'Me, me, me. I think, I want it like this, I...'. No, I live in this country, I'm grateful. And anyone who wants to move elsewhere, they should be allowed to do so. And I think that we are not – we are – I don't want to

associate with anyone, quite frankly, who is – who has got a violent, aggressive nature.
[03:52:15] It's always negotiating, talking and under – trying to understand each other.

And you met you the Queen, yes?

I met the Queen.

Yeah.

I met the King Charles and I did quite a few things. I didn't get paid for it. I did it because I wanted to do it and I appreciate that I had the support, by knowing the Queen and saying, 'Well done.' And that's the country I want to live in and value, value togetherness. I don't want to move back to violence and aggression. No, we're overdue now. It's unforgivable what a group of people had committed, unforgivable. So, we're waiting and hoping for the very best. And hopefully, hopefully, the realisation that killing doesn't work in this world anymore, single-handedly killing. [03:54:02] So, let's hope so. Let's hope so. Let's hope so. And so many, so many people might have perhaps – I didn't involve my – I'm not a great philosopher about how that was possible. Who had given the tools to commit such a crime? I don't know. And who supported that? I don't know. But I think I'm waiting to hear that world to speak up, because just dismissing it is – it doesn't help. But I think whatever religion it is, doesn't matter, religion means God fearing. And it is following that, our role or short life here, and then to become answerable. So, please God, it will come.

Susan, thank you so much for this interview, for sharing your history. And we're going to look at the photographs shortly.

Okay.

One moment

No, no, so you do what you – what it is to protect my family.

Susan, one second. Just one moment.

Okay.

[03:56:00] [Long pause]

Yes, now? Should I speak?

Yes.

This photo is taken, I can't remember the year. I wasn't even born then yet in Felsőgöd, where we – he planned to open up his little business, wood and coal. And there were two people who lived in Felsőgöd and he's in the middle.

And what is – that's your father in the middle?

That's my father in the middle.

And what's his name, please?

His name is Ernő Blau, B-l-a-u, and –

And Susan, is that the only picture you have?

That's the only picture I have of my family.

[03:58:00] *And you don't have any picture of your mother?*

I'm sorry to say I don't. I come from a small, little village and Felsőgöd, we never had a camera. And we just, we never found it important to take photos in those days.

Thank you.

Now, this picture shows the few of us, we weren't too many others, of times of after survival. And we were actually recovering ourselves by playing games. And it – this is place is in Ribbingelund in Sweden and these costumes were being lent to us.

And where are you, Susan?

And I am in the middle. I have got the big – I have got the –

Mickey Mouse.

Mickey Mouse ears and we played games.

Thank you.

This picture, I believe I might have been twelve years old perhaps. And I don't know what the occasion was that I had a picture taken, because it wasn't very common to do so. And still a happy face, together with my family and it was a good time to be together.

Well, this was, this picture was with my friend, my first friend for a long, long time.

[04:00:02] And then, we were living in Sweden and happy to have survived. And happy to be together, tell each other a little bit, not too much of our past and hoping for a good future.

This picture shows a new beginning, a new life ahead after the tragedy that befell our family. And it shows that we have started learning and perhaps, reading and seeing ourselves as deserving survivors. And with my two friends, who perhaps told me about their background. I've forgotten, but it shows normality and gratitude.

Where are you in the photo, please?

I am in the photo sitting, and sitting with someone with long hair [laughs].

On the left?

On the left, yes.

That's my brother.

Yes, it is.

That is a picture of my brother, my brother who was two years older than myself. And he was, from memory, he was quite fastidious about his looks. He was a good-looking man, though. And I don't recall what the occasion was, but I think this picture speaks about him. **[04:02:10]** And it might have been some years since, well, I know, since he came back to Hungary.

And what was his name?

His name was Laszlo Blau.

Thank you.

And this picture is the man I married when I was eighteen years old and had a happy marriage. And he passed away about seven years ago now and we had a long marriage together. And this was taken in Canada, I think.

And this was an engagement photograph, is that correct?

It probably was an engagement, yes.

And his name?

His name, Abraham. He was called Al in Canada, in Toronto, Pollack.

Yes, please.

And this picture, I am in the middle and my three daughters are here, and my grandchildren are here. And since then, I have several great-grandchildren. And this was taken, I don't remember what year that was, but it's a treasure.

Yes, please.

Here we see a great day when I had received the OBE. [04:04:04] My grandson came, my daughter. Next to it is me and my granddaughter. And that was a very special and – to have received the OBE later on.

The few pictures we have together. And my husband and myself taking –

And when?

I don't know the year, but he passed away about seven years ago. And this was of course, earlier. It must have been an occasion.

In London?

In London.

Thank you.

And here we see my being – my having received the Freedom of the City honour. So, now we can take a flock of sheep across the river. And my daughter is showing that and my grandson is also with us. It was an important day for us.

And when was it taken?

When was it taken? I can't remember now.

A few years ago?

Yes, that's all. Wasn't too long ago.

Okay, thank you.

Well, here we see two items from our kitchen in Felsőgöd. **[04:06:00]** And one was the grinder that I used when I was told to do my duty. And the other one was the chopper, chopping the walnuts and things like that. And I often used them when I was told.

And how did you get those things?

Well, we found it actually, the house that we lived in was absolutely taken apart. And somebody had taken these two items away. And after the war, when my brother returned, he found the two items with someone who returned them to him. And I cherish it, it's a souvenir to my years in Felsőgöd.

Thank you. Susan, thank you again, so much for the interview, and for sharing your photographs and your history. And those two, showing us those two objects.

Thank you for remembering me. Two items I cherish very much, very special to me. The only two pieces that I inherited from my village in Felsőgöd.

Thank you, Susan.

[04:08:05]

[End of transcript]