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**Interview Transcript Title Page**

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<b>Ref. no:</b>	119

<b>Interviewee Surname:</b>	Kraus- Lefkovics
<b>Forename:</b>	Sara
<b>Interviewee Sex:</b>	Female
<b>Interviewee DOB:</b>	11 December 1933
<b>Interviewee POB:</b>	Bratislava, Czechoslovakia

<b>Date of Interview:</b>	20 March 2006
<b>Location of Interview:</b>	Salford, Machester
<b>Name of Interviewer:</b>	Rosalyn Livshin
<b>Total Duration (HH:MM):</b>	4 hours 45 minutes

**REFUGEE VOICES:  
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE**

**INTERVIEW: 119**

**NAME: SARA KRAUS-LEFKOVICS**

**DATE: 20 MARCH 2006**

**LOCATION: MANCHESTER**

**INTERVIEWER: ROSALYN LIVSHIN**

**[Problem with time codes: tape 1 and tape 2 have a continuous time code starting at 2 hours and 14 minutes 43 seconds finishing at 4 hours and 8 minutes and 59 seconds. Tape 3, 4, and 5 have a continuous time code starting 0 minutes to 2 hours 37 minutes and 8 seconds]**

**TAPE 1**

**Tape 1: 2 hours and 14 minutes and 43 seconds**

RL: I am interviewing Sara Kraus-Lefkovits and the interview is taking place on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2006. The interview is taking place in Salford, Manchester and I am Rosalyn Livshin.

RL: Can you tell me your name?

SK: My name is Sara Kraus-Lefkovits and I was born in Bratislava, in the year 1933, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of the 12<sup>th</sup> 1933.

RL: Now, I want you tell me something about your family background, about your father and mother's family.

SK: My father came from a village called Topolcany, it was a very prominent Jewish family, a very orthodox Jewish family. My grandfather, my father's father, was the head of the community there; he was called the Rosh Hakohol, my grandfather. My father came from a very big family; there were nine of them at home.

And my mother came from Munkacevo which was sometimes Czechoslovakia and sometimes Hungary. In the war it happened to be Hungary. And she came from a very Chassidic family. Both families were very warm families and I had a very, very happy childhood, until the war started and you know, they were very, they were very warm people, both sides, very warm. My father was a very strict man, but very, very loving. It was a very good combination. A very deeply religious man, but we had to listen, we had

to obey, there was a lot of love there, a lot of love there, and that gave me the basis for my life. I think my life, and that I survived and the way I live today comes from the love and the strength that my father gave me as a child.

My mother too, she was very loving, very concerned for her children. She was a different type, she was a very lively type, we used to sing a lot with her. She was a very pleasant person. So, my childhood as such at home was very regulated but very, very pleasant and very warm.

**Tape 1: 2 hours and 18 minutes 5 seconds**

RL: Can I just ask you, going back to your grandparents, your memories of your grandparents?

SK: My memories, ah ... My father's grandfather was, my father's father, was a bit of a cooler person. He was a very loving, very nice, very kind man, but my real memories, the more memories that I have are of my mother's father who was a very, very warm loving grandfather, very much so. As a matter of fact I spent a few months with him during the war, in hiding there and we were living there with him and the memories although are of very, very hard times, but the memories of him are just beautiful, he was a very warm, very loving, very giving person.

RL: What did they do for a living?

SK: They were in textiles. My father, my grandfather, both my grandfathers were in textiles. They were very, very wealthy people, before the war they were very, very wealthy, but they never lived like that, you know, our life was very normal, we didn't live on the wealth, it wasn't something we lived off, it was very normal. We were brought up as very normal children at home, and my grandparents were also very, my grandfather in Monkacevo was a very, very well to do man, a real heavy millionaire, but we never felt it, the money went to others, he gave a lot, he really gave a lot away. I remember people coming in the war as well, and he just gave, he gave all the time, but that was, we didn't even notice it, it was very natural and it was just the way we lived, and we lived very normal, we didn't have any luxuries or anything like that. We led a good life, we had a very good life, we used to go on holidays in the summer and the winter but it wasn't anything ostentatious, my parents didn't believe in that, I think if they had they would have survived the war, we weren't spoiled.

RL: You say your father was one of nine children.

SK: Yes, my father was one of nine.

RL: Where did the other children live? His brothers and sisters?

SK: Well, to start with they all lived in Czechoslovakia. Most of them lived in Pressburg, Bratislava. A very close knit family, although there were two mothers, I had a

step grandmother. But we didn't notice that, we were all one big family, very close knit, very, very, warm to each other, and in the beginning we all lived there, but then of course when the war came some of them died in Auschwitz, and some were in hiding and some of them survived and those who survived we got together again, those who could. Some lived in England, some lived in Israel and some families lived in Hungary, but we were still a very close knit very warm family. Very, we always, also on the other side, my grandfather from Monkacevo, they were a smaller family, but also very, very, very,

**Tape 1: 2 hours and 21 minutes 8 seconds**

very, very, I got a, actually not many survived from that side. My grandfather was gassed in Auschwitz in 44. I have got one cousin who survived who is also a grandchild of this grandfather and he is very, very close to this day, it was a very, that was how we lived, that was our life, the family life, and others unfortunately got lost in the war.

I had an aunt, my mother had three siblings. She had a sister, an older sister, who had one child, and this sister, she survived Auschwitz, but she died straight after because she was ill, from the camp, she wasn't well. So she survived, we did talk to her, we didn't see her any more, we did talk to her in 45 ... 46 and then she died. She was moved to Sweden after the war, from Auschwitz, she was brought to Sweden. One uncle, the brother of my mother, he never married, he died in Auschwitz. My aunt's husband also died in Auschwitz, the day they took him and my grandfather, they both died in Auschwitz. They were gassed, people came back and told us they were gassed the day they were taken which was actually Shavuoth in 1944, and they were gassed there. And my mother had another brother who did survive in Shanghai, he went to Shanghai, he survived there and he married but he never had any children. So we are nearly the only, my mother's children who really survived, and my aunt who had this one daughter, and she survived, she was hiding in Hungary in Budapest, and she survived, and we are still very close. Those who remained we are still very close.

RL: And of your father's family? How many of those survived?

SK: My father's oldest sister survived. She was also in camps, she was in a camp on Czechoslovakia, what do you call the place? I can't think ... it will come to me ... She was there, and my father's mother survived. My father lost two brothers in the war in Auschwitz. One brother went to Israel before the war, and his four younger sisters, one of them was married in Switzerland, so she survived there, one of them went to Israel, so they were the other two who survived the war. One of them was a child, older than me at the time, and she also, she has her own story of hiding all over the place. But she survived and thank God she has a very nice family today. And another aunt she also, she just went through hell and survived, unfortunately she is not alive any more, we are talking about older people and there were children and thank G-d ... I mean ...

RL: What are your earliest memories as a child?

SK: Well, that is very interesting. My earliest, my very earliest memories are very interesting, well, first of all of the home, the family home, you know it was so warm and so closely knit that I remember a lot happening at home, you know the way my mother bathed us and the way we had supper and we had to sit quietly, the children didn't talk, and you know, we had, it was very, we had rules and regulations and we had to abide by that.

**Tape 1: 2 hours and 24 minutes 57 seconds**

Every Sunday, my mother had a girl for us, a Jewish girl who took us out in the week, and on a Sunday the girl had off and my parents took us to a Kosher restaurant and we used to have our tea there. It was very, very nice and I will never forget that, it is a lovely, lovely memory. And I think life in Bratislava in those days, although the tzoras had started, but life for us in Bratislava from 33 on wasn't bad, until Hitler came in life wasn't bad.

We lived very normal, it was a very close knit family life, my aunt, my uncle in Czechoslovakia, they were together. I remember very well outings I had with my parents. I remember the flat where we lived, actually I went back there, to Czechoslovakia, I wanted to see the flat and a woman lived there and she wouldn't let me in. I went back there twice and I begged her, I don't want anything other than ... I won't take, I won't touch anything I just want to see the place, she wouldn't let me in. However unfortunately I would have loved... the furniture is still there, our furniture, and in those days it was a modern flat. But she wouldn't let us in, so that is that.

RL: Can you describe the flat?

SK: Well, the flat was ... we had, first of all the kitchen was very big, very comfortable nice big kitchen, and a big hall where you came in and there used to play the children. And then we had three bedrooms and a living room. So it was very comfortable and very nice, for those days it was very, we had running water of course, I mean not everybody had running water, my husband in Satmar, they got there running water then. We had all the amenities already, and gas already in the kitchen and it was very comfortable, very comfortable, very nicely furnished, very comfortably furnished flat, yes, as children we felt very warm and very good there, you know ...

RL: Whereabouts was this flat?

SK: In the middle of town.

RL: Do you remember the street?

SK: Pannenska, it was called Pannenska, number 27 Pannenska Street.

RL: And on what floor was it?

SK: It was one up ... you know ... one up ... it was very comfortable. The bathroom was very nice, in those days you know we didn't have the luxuries like we do today, but it was comfortable for what we needed, it was very nice ...

RL: How big was the block?

**Tape 1: 2 hours and 27 minutes 38 seconds**

SK: The block was about three or four storey, three storey high. Yes, I can't remember the neighbours, I can't remember the neighbours, but the flat is very clear to me. We loved it, you know, me and my sister. Then the first year, the first school year, we were still going in school there. That was the only schooling I had before the war.

RL: What school was that?

SK: That was a Jewish orthodox school, a Jewish orthodox school in Bratislava, only girls. And I remember one occasion, I remember very well Monkacevo, we used to visit my grandparents a lot in Monkacevo. It was a very nice place, we loved it there, we loved it there, very nice, I don't know if its relevant. I mean once, my grandfather was a Vizhnitzer Chossid, very big Vizhnitzer Chossid and when the Ahavas Yisroel died it was two generations, his son Chaim Meir became the Rebbe. And he came to my grandfather to be crowned and my grandfather, my grandfather had a big house in Monkacevo at the time, so he came there to be crowned, he was a very big supporter of them, he had a lot of money and he supported them. And I remember, I was barely three then, and then my parents took me, we went out, and there were hundreds of people came to this crowning of the Rebbe, and I remember I was very scared, because it was very wild, everybody wanted to get into the flat and there was no room. For me it is a very, very dear memory. Although I remember crying and being afraid because people were wild, they wanted to get into the flat, they broke windows; there wasn't room for everybody, so they danced in the yard. I think back on it with very, very much a lot of warmth and love; they really gave me something for all of my life. I do go to the Vizhnitzer Rebbe now because they are very warm people. This is something that I remember from earliest memories. And you know then there was life at home.

What is very striking in my memory ... first of all when they took away our flat, the Germans came in and took away first the business. My father had to leave the business, just like that, and that we did. And then we had to leave the flat, our old flat, and we had to go to the outskirts of town. Jews weren't allowed to live in town, so we had to go and live, we had another flat on the outskirts of town. And beneath there, and there were difficulties there in those days... I remember the Nazis coming in. One Seder night for instance, there was a knock on the door, and they burst in, the Nazis burst in. We were sitting around the table, and they were looking for my, for men, there was nobody else except for my father there, and my father's mother was there, but she was there unofficially, so we just stuffed her under the bed, we pushed her under the bed, so they wouldn't find her, because she was there unofficially at the time, and they were looking all over, it was terrible, you know rough and noisy and shouting and screaming, they

were looking for men. And somehow they didn't take my father, which was I think, I mean we went through so many miracles, and I think that was one of them, they did not take my father, they left him there, and after, we were shaken, they left, and after a few hours they left, and they didn't find my grandmother either, we got her out from under the bed, very,

**Tape 1: 2 hours and 31 minutes 36 seconds**

very shaken, but we continued with the Seder. These are things which a child doesn't forget.

There were many occasions like that, when we had to wear the yellow star, when you went out with the yellow stars it was an uncomfortable feeling, I think for the grown ups it was even more. Because a child was a child, but for the grown up it was a terrible experience to go out with that yellow star, it, well, life was difficult, you know you didn't go any more to restaurants, you didn't, you really kept to yourself, you didn't have the help in the house like you used to have. Life changed, but I had my parents, and that is what gave me my security. I had my parents and the love of my parents, the warmth, I think it is very important, I have been through, educating children for 40 years, I can see all along life for children is a life luck, and ...

RL: You say you moved to the outskirts of town ...

SK: Yes ...

RL: Did you find that flat? Did your parents find that flat?

SK: My parents found that flat, my parents found that flat, how I don't know, I can't remember how they found the flat.

RL: Do you remember the address?

SK: No, I can't remember the address.

RL: Just coming back to the first flat and where you were living, was that a Jewish area of Bratislava?

SK: Yes, a Jewish area. We had some relations living in the same road and my aunt lived round the corner, it was a very Jewish neighbourhood. We had to, the shops were there, the kosher shops, yes we lived all our life with a big family in Czechoslovakia, we had uncles and cousins, and we all lived in the neighbourhood, so we got together a lot, oh yes, yes, it was a very Jewish neighbourhood.

RL: Which Shul did the family belong to?



SK: Well, there was the great Shul in Bratislava, the main Shul, Yossele Rosenblatt used to daven there, he used to be the Chazzan there before the war. And that was actually the Chassam Sopher's Shul, my father is a direct, he comes direct from the Chassam Sopher, and we very much kept that in the family. Until this day it plays a big roll in our family.

RL: In what way?

**Tape 1: 2 hours and 33 minutes 0 second**

SK: In tradition, in religion. We think a lot about what we say and how we should behave, how we should act, how we should be, and we follow him. We try, we try to follow his ways, which is a stable Jewish life, you want to keep that on, the rules he set, the things he said and the mukzot, the sayings that he told us, it was for future generations, and we studied this. We studied this and we keep very much to it, these traditions should be kept up and the real Jewish values, especially the values should be kept up, and we keep it in the family, my children, my grandchildren, they keep it all, and it is very, very, it is very important for us. I mean that is what life is all about. And, I tell you, that is when the trouble started, it was very difficult ...

RL: Was your father involved in the community?

SK: My father was not much, my father used to learn a lot, my father was a very big learner, first of all he was in the business. It was a big business and he was busy in the business and then he was a big learner, he learned. I mean he learned Torah, he sat and learned for hours. I mean whenever he had time he was learning, that was his main occupation, his main occupation was the learning, yes, very much so

RL: Did he belong to anything at all?

SK: We belonged to Agudas Yisroel, we belonged to that definitely, Agudas Yisroel, and all our friends were from of Agudas Yisroel, in those days, yes, we had a lot of friends, a lot of, lot of friends in Czechoslovakia, Bratislava, my aunt, my uncle, I mean definitely we belonged to this community. Yes definitely, very much so, but specially my father, he wasn't involved in any communal work as such.

RL: You mentioned that you used to go away on holiday ...

SK: Yes, we used to go to Tatra, in the mountains, near, in Czechoslovakia, the mountains called the Tatra and there were beautiful holiday places, people go even now. And The Alps in Czechoslovakia, and they are very, very beautiful, and we used to go there, especially in the winter, and also in the summer, my parents went a lot there. My family came from Monkacevo, my aunt, and she came with us, and she came from the Alps and we had very nice holidays there, very healthy and very, very nice. You know, it was winter, summer, otherwise we were busy in town, I mean, my mother wasn't working at the time, she was a housewife, but she kept a busy home and there was

visitors and people coming in and out and there was relations coming in, it was a busy household, and my father was very busy in business, so that, life was just, life was very nice in those days. Afterwards, I mean, things were very difficult.

RL: Who did you play with as a child, at that point?

**Tape 1: 2 hours and 37 minutes 15 seconds**

SK: My parents had friends, and some of the people live in London today, some of my friends, yes, with some I used to play as children, I have still got these friends in London. Some are getting on, some of them survived, many unfortunately did not, but some of them survived, some from this family, some from that family, and I meet these people today, we still meet and we remember those days, and they are my friends, but unfortunately that finished early because we had to run away. And we had to run in each direction, you know, where we could.

RL: Can you describe, like a, a typical Shabbos in your family, in those days.

SK: Ahhh, well, first of all my father was ready for Shabbos at 2 o'clock on Friday. For him Shabbos was, at 2 o'clock he was ready, for him Shabbos was, you know, at 2 o'clock he was ready, he sat with his sefer, with his book, learning. The shop was closed lunch time on a Friday, and he was ready for Shabbos. The household was busy, getting ready for Shabbos, and he always told my mother, half an hour before the candles had to be lit, that she should be ready on time, he was very particular. And it was a very, very busy household, yes, in Bratislava it was, later on it was busier when we were in Israel but we were always, we were ready, and as Shabbos came in it was beautiful, the whole atmosphere changed, my father changed, the whole atmosphere changed, you sort of forgot the everyday life, it was really, and you were immersed in the Shabbos. You know my mother lit the candles and from then on we were relaxed, and then he said, oh yes, my father went to Shul of course, and when he came home he involved the children in all the services, and he told us stories about, you know from the scriptures and he involved the children very, very much, in the life of Shabbos. And that is how he, and then we used to go and visit our aunts and uncles on Shabbos morning, or Shabbos afternoon, it was really a family day, very much so, my father had his shiurim, his lessons on Shabbos, he used to learn and was always in the afternoon he had his lessons and it was very, very, very comfortable, very nice, and my mother had time, you know she made time for the children. And my aunt and my cousins, we got together. It was very nice, very comfortable.

RL: Did the women go to Shul at all?

SK: They did, they did go Shabbos morning, We went Shabbos morning to Shul, yes. It was a very nice Shul and we always had a good chazzan in Shul. It was a very well known big Shul and it was nice to go to Shul. Yes, there was another community there at the time, which wasn't frum, and we had nothing to do with them. I remember very distinctly that my father wouldn't let us have anything to do with them, it was called the

Nero community. And we had nothing to do with them, so we kept to our orthodox, there were quite a lot of orthodox people at that time, in those days, and we had our friends, our parents had their friends, and we had our friends, and then we had our family.

RL: What about memories of Yom Tov?

**Tape 1: 2 hours and 40 minutes 28 seconds**

SK: Yom Tov, the same, well when Yom Tov came or Shabbos came we just changed, you know, people forgot every day life, it was uplifted life, we knew that, you felt it in the air and the children felt it, it was just uplifted life, and the parents were there for us, as I say telling us stories, about the Yom Tov and stories about the Rabbonim and we were spending time together, we went for walks on the long Shabbos in the summer, and the atmosphere was very beautiful. And of course every yom tov has got its own speciality and they were brought to the forefront and they were explained, and the yom tov was yom tov, you know, we felt it very much, it was very, very, very warm ...

RL: How did you manage at Sukkos time, being on the third floor of the flat?

SK: Sukkos, my grandfather in Monkacevo, we went a lot there, he had a Sukkah built in the house. One of the rooms, you could take off the roof. We went a lot there for Sukkos. So he, he had the means and he did it, and then we went to my other grandfather who had a Sukkah built in his yard in Tapolcany, we weren't much at home for Sukkos, we didn't have a Sukkah in our own flat, if need be we could make a Sukkah in the yard but we usually went to the grandparents. Yes, Monkacevo was very, very nice, I loved there, and Pesach too, we were a lot in Monkacevo for Pesach. They were very, very nice, and remember the room usually belonged to the servant, the servant girl who slept in that room all year round, and on Pesach that room was emptied and the roof was opened up and, on Sukkos, and that was a Sukkah. It was very, very comfortable. And in those days very few people had it and it was very comfortable. So Sukkos was no problem really, the Yom Tovim we went mostly to my grandparents. There weren't that many Yom Tovim, and when the tsoras started I was barely six, and then things changed, you did the best, we moved to the outskirts of town, so we built a Sukkah in the yard, so things had changed, we made a Sukkah in the yard and my father managed there.

And Pesach as well, on seder night the Germans as I said, the Germans came in and we managed at home and my mother made Pesach, what she could get and what was available and we had Pesach at home, we did the best.

RL: Do you actually remember the day the Germans came in? You know, as they arrived ...

SK: Well, when I come from in Czechoslovakia, I can't remember the day they arrived in Czechoslovakia ... I remember the day they came into Hungary very, very clearly, I was an older child then, that I remember very, very clearly, when they came into Hungary, it was three years later, four years later ... when they came into Czechoslovakia also we

didn't live in the middle of town ... mind you, when they came in we did, when they came in we did. But I can't remember the actual day that they marched in. I remember the changed life, how everything changed, by the time, when they came in, how everything changed. I might not have even been on the street when they marched in, I can't remember the actual marching in, but I remember later on in Hungary, but maybe I

**Tape 1: 2 hours and 44 minutes 18 seconds**

wasn't on the street. I was only a young child, you know, otherwise I would have remembered it very clear, but life of course changed drastically, once they came in ... we were scared on the street, we had to be careful with every step that you took because you never knew who you meet, or what you meet, who you meet ... I mean, this fright stays with you for years and years. Being frightened to go on the street, if I saw a policeman ... years later I used to cross the road, that really gave you this fright of the war, I think, it left a lasting impression on you. (muffled here interference with the microphone) , the fear is in you, the fear of the war, is, you can't get rid of that, especially as a child and we were so afraid of things.

RL: How soon after the Germans came in did you have to leave your flat?

SK: That was very soon. As soon as the Germans came in they took over the business, that was the first thing that they did, and my grandfather died because of that, they came in and they took away his business in Tapolcany and he had such a shock he had a heart attack and he died. The outcome out of that, it was such a shock to him, he wasn't that young any more, and suddenly his business, his life long business was taken away from him, you know and in such a brutal way. Apparently they kicked him as well, he wouldn't give up so easily, and he had a heart attack and he died after that. My father was a younger man, they took it over and that was it, it was gone. He did have some money, which later on we could save ourselves, it helped us in the war, but that was very soon, and then very soon we had to leave the flat, I remember the devastation my parents felt when they had to leave the flat, it was a lovely place and we had to leave the flat.

RL: Do you remember that day?

SK: Yes, I remember when we had to leave the flat. It was a very sad day, we had to leave everything in the flat, the furniture, everything, everything was left there, we had to go to the other side of town, we took hardly anything with, a few clothes and that was it, we had to leave everything there, and some of the, some of the crystal and silver my parents had given to somebody before the, when the Germans came in, and they saw what was going on, they gave some of the crystal and silver to non Jews to hide it for them, but the rest, everything was left in the flat, you couldn't take anything. As I say the furniture was even now there, and this woman wouldn't let me in, and certain things were there, she was afraid I would claim them, you see, I had no intention of claiming anything, I just wanted to see the place where I was born and brought up, you see, but we took with very little in the other flat, but I don't think that was very important, the important thing was that you survived. That you were together, that nobody was

schlepped away, that nobody was pulled, you know from the family, was pulled away, that was the main thing, survival. In those days of course, I didn't know about that, but the Jews worked very hard to save the Jews of Czechoslovakia, it was a well known fact, there was a man called Michael Ber Weissmandel, who worked very hard, he got in touch with some of the Germans, I can't remember his name now, and he negotiated with him a lot for a big big, big amount of money and he was going to save the Czech Jews,

**Tape 1: 2 hours and 47 minutes 55 seconds**

my father was involved in all that very much, and I didn't know at the time, I was a child, so I didn't know about it, I read after the war about it, and he wrote letters all over and people sent him money, but he just couldn't get the money this Mr Weissmandel, and the first instalment for this German a friend of my father's gave, also a very wealthy man, and he gave the first instalment just to keep the Germans quiet, just to see that there was money coming in, so he gave the first instalment and that is how he pushed it out a bit, he really negotiated for a couple of years. And he could have saved the Jews in Czechoslovakia but no funds were coming in from nowhere in the world, you know from Switzerland people didn't believe, the Zionists wouldn't give, and he couldn't, the poor man he was devastated, until the Germans they got fed up and they wouldn't wait any longer.

RL: In what way was your father involved in that?

SK: In money matters you see, to try and get money and the relations from outside of Czechoslovakia and their families in Switzerland, you know, he tried to help, he tried to help, but people didn't believe, in the beginning of the war, when we spoke to ... I mean you couldn't believe that it was true, that they were gassing people, they were taking people to Auschwitz and they were taking people to places and they thought oh all right, they take them to work ... if anything, that is what the Germans said ... we will take them to work ... if you think about it today, it's really mind boggling, what happened, and people, the world didn't believe it, it was too late when everybody woke up, much too late, and that is why we couldn't be saved. And when the Jews in Czechoslovakia saw this then they started to find ways of leaving, because they started transports started to go, and those who had some money or some means or whatever, they tried to get out, but this was very late and it was very difficult.

RL: In the meantime can you just describe what life was like? First of all, this new flat on the outskirts, what was that like?

SK: It wasn't bad ... it was a bit of a flat, and mainly Jewish neighbours because most people had to leave town, everyone went out, and we lived there and we had neighbours, and of course we had the yellow star all the time and when you went out, all your coats and all your cardigans, everything had a yellow star on because you daren't go out without it, us children as well, we went out on the street and we had a yellow star, and that was already frightening enough, we knew already when we saw a German, we saw a soldier or we saw a policeman you just crossed, we went the other way, you know ... We

lived, we got kosher things as much as we could, we kept kashrus, as much as possible we got the kosher stuff. They took away the business so we didn't have work, but he was learning, his learning was very important to him, and as I say we had some money, and life went on very difficult, very difficult, a lot of fright, a lot of worry, very lot of worries of what was going to happen, and you didn't know what happened to other members of the family who were not in town, you didn't know what happened to them either. There

**Tape 1: 2 hours and 51 minutes 44 seconds**

was no communication. There were no telephones in those days, and the post was very irregular, I have got a few maybe, not letters, but postcards, but very few, the post was very irregular, so they didn't know what happened to the other people, and we were worried all the time about what happened to the other relations, and then, that was the last year before we had to run away, I went to school there, the Jewish school. That was an irony I had one year of schooling, there was also the school was there, there were a lot of girls in our class, it was in the outskirts there, the school, and we attended the school.

RL: Did the school have a name?

SK: I don't remember the name, I am sorry I can't remember. It was a Jewish Orthodox School, Beis Yaakov or what, I don't know. It was a Jewish Orthodox school, I remember my friend, my parent's friend's children all went to the school.

RL: And when you went out on the street to school, did you ever encounter any trouble?

SK: Not as such, I mean we were taken to school. My mother wouldn't let us go on our own. Not really, we had to be careful, we had to be very careful, and you wore a yellow star you didn't want people to ask you "Who are you?" because very often you had to show your papers, legitimise yourself, that was all through the war years, wherever I was during the war you had legitimise yourself, you had to, even a child, we had to have a paper on you in case anybody stopped you. Show your paper, you know, who you are, were you legitimate or not and later on I got papers that were legitimate but you had to have your papers on you, and in those days already. In the war years, it started in Czechoslovakia; we lived in the outskirts of town you had to legitimise yourself. And you didn't go much about in any case, you kept at home, you didn't want to, I didn't want to be caught on the street anyway. So we kept a lot at home and the parents kept an eye on you, you know, as children, as children we didn't suffer as much as adults, we didn't understand that much, and when we really got into trouble then it was more serious, then we really understood.

RL: How old was your sister?

SK: My sister is three years younger than me. She was born in 35 and this was 39/40, so she was younger than me.

RL: And what was her name?

SK: Ruth.

RL: And there were just the two of you?

**Tape 1: 2 hours and 54 minutes 27 seconds**

SK: In the family there were just the two of us, yes, yes, yes. She was a very different child, she had a very lively imagination, and she played, she played in a show, for me it was all very real, but for her she was acting a show and imagined it all. Different child, different way children take it ...

RL: And how long did life go on like that? You know that you went to school and the yellow star and ...

SK: This went on for about a year, but then the school stopped, you couldn't, you couldn't. And when the real trouble started, as I say, people were worried ...

RL: What year was that?

SK: It was in '41 ... '40/'41 ... in '41 we were ready to get out of the country, well you couldn't get out ... Before the war my friends did make some efforts to get out of the country, but it was too late, when they realised it was too late, but then, then you started other ways. Then you had to leave the country unofficially, when the Germans came in, there was no official going, there were no embassies you can turn to, you were like caught, animals caught, you see you couldn't go and apply for a visa it was non existent in those days. So what you started to do it, we tried to get out of the country immediately, and that is what my mother achieved. You see she, my mother found a non Jewish woman, who took people across the border, from Czechoslovakia to Hungary, for a lot of money, and this was a special procedure, and we had to go across the border by night, and that was what my mother eventually arranged.

RL: And how did she find her?

SK: How she found her ... my mother was very good all during the war, she saved us, thanks to my mother that we were saved. She was very, very ambitious, she was very, she wasn't frightened. She found her way, and how she exactly got around in these things, but she was very, very good at that, and my mother had a survival instinct, she had an instinct of survival, and with that she helped a lot of people and us. That is how we survived, my father would never have managed it, he was frightened. He was a different type.

Eventually she found this woman and I suppose this woman, didn't take only us, she took other people as well, another family. When she found this woman and she saw there was no other way out, my parents saw we had to escape because the transports started going

and we didn't know where they were going and we didn't hear from the people again. So it was arranged on a certain day, in April 42, April 42, yes. I would be the first one, we didn't want to go as a family. You went single, because in case they catch one, they shouldn't catch the whole family.

**Tape 1: 2 hours and 57 minutes 57 seconds**

So what happened was, I saw they were getting ready some clothes for me. How old was I at the time? Eight. And they got some clothes ready for me, and they got a parcel ready for me, like a little ... What do you call it? A farm girl, like in a farm ... You know ... What do you call this in English? A girl from a farm ... you know ... they got me such colourful clothes like those Hungarian farm people used to wear.

RL: Like a peasant?

SK: Pardon?

RL: Like a peasant?

SK: Ya, ya, ya, frilly skirt, a big skirt, and mother put a few clothes into a handkerchief that is how they travelled in those days, those non Jewish girls. And I remember my father called me, and took me on his lap, and he said, he explained to me that they had to send me away, they had got no other way, it was to save our life, he has got to send me away. And you see it was from my father, what my father said went, I always believed my father, I never argued, I never doubted. If my father said that was the truth, that's how it was, we didn't hesitate, we didn't think about it twice, so he told me I am sorry I have got to send you away, and he told me what was going to happen, I mean, I would be going on a train on my own, without the yellow star, and I have got to watch out of the train, and I had an aunt with me, one of the aunts in the family was going with me. I can't travel with her but I have got to watch her, when she gets off the train I am to get off the train. And I shall walk behind her, not near her. He told me the whole procedure and what will happen and how, what I have got to do, and after he told me, "One thing I ask of you", then he blessed me of course eventually, and he said, "I don't know if I will ever see you again, but I ask you, don't forget who you are, don't forget what you saw at home, and don't forget who you are, and don't forget the things you kept in the house." All the dinim and ... and then he had to go, it was just ... incredible, I think it left a lasting impression on me, you know, my father saying that to me. They took me to the train, well I couldn't walk with them, they had the yellow star, and I had to walk in front of them, and they took me to the train, and at a certain point I just had to go on and they showed me which train it was, and I had to go onto the train and I had to find myself a seat, and I went to the window, and I wasn't allowed to wave, so they should notice that I was anything to do with them, I mean they had the yellow star, and I remember standing there in the train, before it left, and holding, there was a bar on the window, holding onto the bar at the window, holding onto the bar, so I shouldn't wave, I was watching my parents, watching my parents, the train started moving, and I sat there watching my parents until they disappeared. And I had a passport in this little bundle, I had a passport



of a non Jew, a non Jewish child, which my mother got, she was very good at these things. I remember I went and sat down on my seat and of course they checked everybody's papers and things and I took mine out and he checked it and it seemed to be alright. I was travelling on my own and sitting there and then, you know, I couldn't even

**Tape 1: 3 hours 2 minutes 39 seconds**

think, I couldn't even think, I was scared stiff and I didn't know what the next minute was going to bring. Every stop, every time it stopped I ran to the window to see if this aunt was getting off or not, and it took about two hours of travelling and I saw her getting off the train, I had to cord up my bundle, and I went off the train and I just walked behind her, I wasn't allowed to go near her as my father said, and we would go to the woods, and when we came to the woods she stopped, deep inside the woods she stopped, and she told me to, she called me to come next to her, and then we continued together and on the way we met this non Jewish woman. So, it was evening already, it became dark and the woman said she would try to take us across the border, this was near the Czechoslovakia boarder with Hungary, she would try and get us across the border but if anything happens she was gone and we would be left on our own. We had no choice, and it was a moonless night, we had specially chosen a moonless night and there were all leaves on the floor, she had told us we mustn't cough, we could hardly breathe, and if possible they shouldn't hear our steps, how could you not hear our footsteps in the leaves, they were dried leaves, and we got near the border and there were Germans patrolling the boarder with dogs. They were walking up and down. This woman knew already very well, the Germans were walking, they were walking like this, sort of from the side, they went to the middle, and then back to the side again, and that is how they did all the time, they were patrolling the borders with dogs, very fierce dogs. And this woman said "We have got to find the moment, when both of them are far" and she knew there was barbed wire all over, and she knew a place in the barbed wire, underneath, that had a hole, and she will get us through there. So we waited there for a long time, until the right moment and two times we thought of going but we couldn't, and eventually she said, "Now" and we crept under this barbed wire, and then we went through no man's land, and after no man's land it was already half, you know, and then it came to the Hungarian border and that was easier to go through, the Germans weren't in yet in Hungary, only the Gendarmes and that is how we got through the border.

And on the other side she had a villa, she had a local house, a little house she had there, like a bungalow and she took us in there, and we were locked in there. There was no questions to ask, I didn't ask anything, my father had told me about this and what was going to happen, and that is how it happened, and we were locked in there, we ate, she knew what to give us, we ate very little, but what she gave us wasn't treif, and after a couple of days there came a carriage with hay, topped up to the top with hay this carriage, and we were going to hide in there, and this carriage was going to take us to Budapest. So we had to crawl under the hay, this was my aunt and me, we crawled under the hay, it was very uncomfortable, the hay was sticking into you, and that is how we left there, in this carriage. And on the way the were soldiers in Hungary they were called Gendarmes, they were worse than the soldiers, they were worse than the Germans, they were very,

very cruel people, they were very, very anti semitic, very cruel, and they stopped us. I heard them shout and ask the driver "What have you got here?" And he said, "I have got hay ..." And he is taking it to his horses. And they have these big, big forks, like they use in the fields, in those days they didn't have such machinery as today, and they kept, they wanted to see if there was anybody underneath, so they kept pushing them into the

**Tape 1: 3 hours 8 minutes 1 second**

hay. And he touched us, but we didn't feel it, it is a miracle, it really is a miracle, I can't explain in any other way, because none of us shouted, we didn't scream out like if something like this hits you. We just didn't feel it, I think anybody who survived, it was a miracle, it was ... we didn't scream out, we didn't shout, and after they were satisfied we continued.

And this journey took more or less the whole day, and at night he came to Budapest, it was Shevuoth, my father had told me before hand it will be Shevuos and you have got to go on a tram, it is Yom Tov but you must go on a tram. This was a terrible thing for me to go on Yom Tov on the tram, and when we went into Budapest my aunt left, she disappeared, so I was left on my own, my father had told me, you go on this tram and you look out of the window until you come to one station and you will find your cousin. This cousin from Munkacevo, she had married in the meantime and she was living in Budapest, and you meet her and you go with her.

Again, I was just a child, barely eight, nearly nine, and I am standing there, on my own, in the night, looking for this cousin of mine. And fortunately she also knew to expect me, so she waited at one of the stations, and I met her, I saw her, and I got off the train, this was one of these electric, the train, the tram, that travel always in town. I got off the tram and I went to my cousin. Now she lived near Budapest, she got married in the meantime and she lived there and I had to hide by her for three months because I didn't speak the language. You see, there again papers awaited me. My mother had worked with my aunt from Munkacevo. They got papers, you see in those days you had to get hold of papers, of Hungarian papers, so that had to get papers of a girl of my age, more or less my age, and what they did the people, instead of, they didn't, when a child died, a Jewish child, they didn't tell the authorities that the child died, they buried them on the quiet, and the Yidden sold the papers, and this was an income for them. So they sold the papers, and my aunt and my mother, they were very good at that, they got hold of such papers, they cost a lot of money, they got hold of such papers and those are the papers that were waiting for me by my cousin.

Shall we stop?

RL: Yes, this tape is about to end so we will stop there.

**Tape 2****Tape 2: 3 hours and 11 minutes 33 seconds**

This is the interview with Sara Kraus-Lefkovits and it is tape 2.

So you were just telling us how you had arrived at this cousin, and you hid with her at the beginning because you didn't have the papers ...

SK: And I didn't know the language.

**Tape 2: 3 hours and 11 minutes 52 seconds**

RL: And you didn't know the language ...

SK: I spoke German and Czech at home. My mother tongue was German, but I didn't know Hungarian, and now I was supposed to live as a Hungarian child, I had to learn the language first of all to survive in Hungary, so I stayed with my cousin hidden, it was near Budapest, it was a place called Rákospalota, it was a little town, her husband was a Rabbi there, called Rákospalota, and so I hid with her ... I hid there for three months.

RL: What was their names?

SK: Their names were Duschinsky, Rav Duschinsky

RL: And did they have family?

SK: No, they were young marrieds, young marrieds, and I hid by them, it was out of town, and I was in this place with a big yard. And it was in the beginning, in those days it wasn't so common yet that children came and refugees ... you know, and I learned the language there, as a child I learnt very fast and once I knew the language I got these papers, and then in the meantime I didn't know what had happened to my sister or to my parents, nobody told me. They wouldn't tell me in case I speak, in case somebody catches me and asks me, and I talk, so they wouldn't tell me, that went on, for two years I didn't know what had happened to my parents. Were they alive? Were they not alive? Nobody told me. And when I knew the language, which took about three months, I got these papers ...

RL: What did you do during those three months? How did you spend the time?

SK: I was playing around there. My cousins were very sweet. I was on very good terms with my cousin, today lives in Los Angeles, an old lady. And I went out shopping with her, it was a little town, it wasn't Budapest, it was a little town, we didn't wear the yellow star there yet, you see the Germans weren't in. Here you had a lot of tzoras from the

Hungarian authorities, a lot of trouble and they wouldn't have refugees they weren't allowed to come in, it was all unofficial of course, but the Germans weren't in yet, so we were more freer, and these were women, is always easier than men, always easier. So, I had some shopping, I remember, I was occupied with her. There weren't many strangers, because we didn't want strangers, it was better strangers didn't know about me, nobody was supposed to know, but we could get around a little bit. So I had a little visit with her, her family, her mother in law lived there, in that house, it was quite a big house, you see her husband took the place of his father as the Rabbi of the town, a little town, and they had a pretty big house there with a very nice yard, and I remember I played a lot in the yard there. There weren't strangers and other children, there weren't supposed to be, she was very sweet, she was a very nice woman my cousin, and time passed, and a child occupies themselves. I was drawing I remember dolls, I cut out dolls and clothes for the dolls, and I put them on, you know, sort of things that a child occupies themselves. I was

**Tape 2: 3 hours and 15 minutes 32 seconds**

praying, and my father told me to pray so I was praying, and time passed. And then I got this paper.

RL: Did you know your cousin before?

SK: Yes, she came from Munkacevo, and we were a lot together as I said, holidays, we were a lot together, and the Rabbi came to Munkacevo we went up. We were very close, we travelled a lot to Munkacevo and they came a lot to us. I have got pictures of the family, my father's family married, his sisters, and my aunt came to these weddings, which in those days wasn't so common because travelling was so much harder than today, but she came, a very, very close knit family. Oh yes, I knew my cousins very well. And, I got these papers, and the first thing was, I had to learn, my name, and not only the name, the name of the whole family, the name of my supposed father, my supposed mother, my supposed siblings, the birthdays, what my father did, all the details of that family, I had to learn, and I learned them.

RL: This was a Jewish family?

SK: A Jewish family ...

RL: Do you remember the name?

SK: I can't remember the name, because every three months it changed, you see, you couldn't stay too long because they gave suspicion, I mean I was like their own child and their own child had died, you see I was on the papers of their own child but that child had died, so, you know, you couldn't stay in a place for any more than, three months maximum and you got papers to move onto the next family, that was what happened. But in order to learn you had to know all your brothers and sisters and what they did, and all the details of the family, what your father did, all the details of the family, you had to learn by heart, and I had to remember them, my cousin tested me on it, and I just had to

learn it, and I did. And then they took me to this place, and that was the place called Miskolc, a place called Miskolc, and I was there, and it gave me the courage, really when I think about it today, I think back to that, my father says, my father says, and I was going, it was always, all my life what my father says was going, when I was married I was still like that. So, I stayed at that place, you see my parents tried to keep us Jewish as long as possible, but in the end we couldn't any longer, we had to be with non Jews.

RL: First of all, so you left your cousins and went to Miskolc and did you know this family?

SK: No, not at all.

RL: So was this the family that had lost the child?

**Tape 2: 3 hours and 18 minutes 37 seconds**

SK: This was the family who had lost this child. I had to fit in there. That was that. The next family was again a different family, I got papers.

RL: So just tell me about this family first, tell me a bit about your stay in Miskolc with this family.

SK: Well, first of all I had an uncle in Miskolc and I knew nobody knew who I was from home, they thought I was, I belonged to this family and that was it, nobody knew who I was from home. And I had this uncle there, and it was very unfair because he said, "I know who you are" it was very unfair for a child of this age because certain things stick in your mind. He should never have done that, because he frightened me, because my father said nobody knows, and he wanted to join me or whatever and I said, "It's not true, it's not true", and it sticks in my mind. So, I lived in that family, I fitted in and I just listened, what they did I did, what they told me I did, and I just listened, I fitted into the family, I lived their life.

RL: How difficult was that for you?

SK: How ...?

RL: How difficult was that for you?

SK: It was difficult, very, very difficult. It was, oh it was, it was almost impossible, it was very hard, for a child, and I didn't know anybody there, and there were children there, and there were, I had to play in the yard, no schooling, I had no schooling, in those days you couldn't go to school. But, I had to fit in, I had to listen and I had to be one of them, and I did, I just did, I tell you, you see its miracles. I never rebelled, and I never, and it all helped, and I saw them, I saw already in Bratislava the way the Germans behaved, the cruelty, and that you knew already so you had to be careful. People can be

so very cruel, and very harsh, and very hard, we knew this so you had to be very careful not to arouse people.

RL: What had you witnessed? You know what kind of cruelty had you witnessed?

SK: Well, first of all when they came to my house that Pesach night. You didn't have someone knocking on the door and coming in, they just knocked down the door and they were there. And they marched through the whole flat, and they were looking for men, you know ...to schlep out, to pull out men. It was incredible, I will never forget that. Also the street, when you saw them catching people, taking people away and people screaming, you went out and just wanted to mind your own business in Czechoslovakia, and suddenly, they just getting people in the street, you see the way they talk and the way they behave, I wasn't used to that, in my milieu, in my, it wasn't a way of talking, in my family was gentle, you talk nicely, I wasn't used to this, until this day it gives me the shivers, some of the days like that. And that was that, and since then I am scared of any

### **Tape 2: 3 hours and 22 minutes 4 seconds**

official, any official person, especially in a uniform, I just go out of the way. And I didn't want to arouse anybody's anger, I couldn't cope with that, I knew I had to live through what now happened and I just adjusted somehow, I think it's an instinct, I mean, it was with the help of Hashem, it was Hashgocha Pratis, there is no other way to explain it, and I fitted in and I played with the children and I ate the food, at least it was kosher, and I fitted in with the family.

RL: How did they treat you?

SK: Very kind, very kind, I mean don't forget they got a lot of money, in those days we still had the money. We lost everything after that, my grandfather, everything. But in those days they still had the money, especially in Hungary my grandfather still had, so he could pay, and these were Yidden with tzoras, business stopped, everything stopped for Jewish families in Hungary, the Germans weren't there but the Hungarians were very, just as bad as the Germans. They just didn't deport you, but they were very bad the Hungarian goyim, very, very cruel, and, so everything stopped for the Jews. There was no money coming in, there was nothing, so they lived off these things, so they weren't bad people, they got a lot of money for it and in the meantime they saved a child, although it was a danger to them, because they could, they did and they could catch children.

I mean, not here, but in another place, they got hold of you on the street. In that family, I didn't live as their own child, I had papers and I came to live with them as somebody who had to find a place to live, I had to live by this family, I couldn't live at home, right. I had to live by this family, they were elderly people, they were very nice people as well, their name was actually Roth. And I will never forget, they were very nice people, anyway I will come to that, there is a difference. These people weren't bad, I remember once, the children of that family planted a pip, a pip from an apple, and he said, "You will

come back and see if it grows.” And very often I wonder if it grew or not, certain things stay in your mind. Of course I could never go back, that was it, and after the war I don’t even remember where it was, but he planted that pip for the family and he said he will come back and he would see in a few years whether a tree grew here. There is certain things that stick in your mind ... and time passes, we used play, and Shabbos was Shabbos, and Yom Tov was Yom Tov and time went on ...

There was no ... I couldn’t ask anybody about my parents, I didn’t, to them I didn’t dare, and there wasn’t anybody else, you see. After three months my aunt appeared, she said that I must move, she didn’t tell me about my parents, she didn’t tell me where my parents were, I didn’t even ask, and my sister, I didn’t ask anything about anybody in the family, I knew I wouldn’t get an answer. And she brought me some other papers from another family, the same sort of thing, and this time she placed me at an elderly couple’s house, and this was in a place called Nyíregyháza and these people, they was Roth, and

**Tape 2: 3 hours and 25 minutes 39 seconds**

I tried to find out, I couldn’t find out what happened to these people Roth, they probably got killed in the war, an elderly couple, they were very kind to me, very nice people, and again, there I lived as not their own child, and I was registered as not their own child, I was somebody who couldn’t live at home and I had to live with somebody. And then, once I got caught on the street, and the Gendarmes, the police, Hungarian police, took me to the police station and started to ask me questions. I happened to be with a lady, this elderly lady at the time, and she answered, so he was very gruff and he said, “I am not asking you, I am asking the child.” And I gave the right answers, he asked me, “Who is your father? Who is your mother? And where are they?” And I gave the right answers and they let me go.

These things happened, and they didn’t happen once, especially when you lived there as a stranger, you see, in the beginning not so many people came, but in time, they got to know that people came through the border, not officially, so they started being wary of it, you see one child here, one child there, nobody noticed, but slowly it became usual, you see other people did that, and you know, in the war, people are crafty and these goyim got to know that they could make a lot of money and it was worthwhile for them, and they were also in danger, but she could disappear. My aunt went with one of them and the Germans caught my aunt and the goyta disappeared. But she was obviously a young child and she they let her go back, so she went back to Bratislava. And she tried again, we had no choice, it was either this or you go to Auschwitz. So people tried what they could, I mean, this was the better choice of the two. They knew where they were going, and these goytas disappeared, they knew where they were going, they knew the area, they knew very well, and they told us, if there was any danger we are not here. So that, you know, and slowly they start infiltrating to Hungary, and again the government knew, so they started watching out for these people, and if they caught you, you were in trouble. So, they were looking out for these children as well, who were living with these families, and didn’t belong to the family and that is what happened with me, it was very nice, I am very grateful, I will never forget them, they were very nice.

RL: How did you spend your day there?

SK: There I joined some sort of a group of children, I remember, there was a group of Jewish children and I used to go there, so the day was spent with a group of Jewish children, I went there, not to learn, I didn't learn much, but you know, we were together and we had some activities and as I said the old couple were very kind, very nice, there are some things you remember now, really zechus zu weistig, they should really, they should get their reward for that, because they were very, very good to me.

RL: What did they do?

SK: They were just very kind. They cared, the bothered, it wasn't only the money, you felt it wasn't only the money they got, they cared. They knew we were a child on our own, they probably knew the circumstances from my aunt. I never talked to them about it

**Tape 2: 3 hours and 29 minutes 24 seconds**

because I thought they didn't know, and they knew that I didn't know about my family you see, and they were very, very considerate. I tried to locate them after the war, but, nobody knew about them, and they were elderly people they must have perished, they were very, very nice. And I stayed there three months and after that time was up I had to move on, and then my aunt came again, she came down from Monkacevo, you see, my aunt was in Monkacevo, she came down from Monkacevo and she again gave me new papers. Again I had to learn all these new names and the new family and my aunt was testing on them, she stayed there a day or two with the family I remember at the time and then she took me to another place, the other place, I can't remember the name of the place where she took me, I can't remember, I can't remember now the place, it will come back to me. And she took me to another family and this time I had to stay there, I also didn't stay there as their own child, I stayed there as a girl who had to find a family to live with for certain reasons, and there were also children in that family, and also time went on and I stayed with them.

RL: Do you remember their names?

SK: I don't remember their names. The people I remember were these Roths, they stuck in my mind. Also the time passed, the people were not bad, they were from Jewish people, all from Jewish people and they knew the circumstances and they got a lot of money for it. I think besides the money, I think they understood the circumstances, and it was dangerous for them, definitely if they were caught, it was illegally for them, they could have been punished very severely. Time went on, I survived it. I lived with this family also for a long time.

RL: How did you get on with that family?



SK: I remember all of the families I got on with. You see I am very obedient, I knew the dangers, when you know the danger you try and fit in, you don't rebel, I had no choice, what choice did I have, that they should throw me out of there? I had nowhere to go. I had nobody, I couldn't contact my aunt, I couldn't contact my cousin. I had no connection with anybody. They didn't give me, because, in case they took me to the station, if I speak, I can tell something, and I can take them to someone, I can take them to my aunt, I can take them to my parents and they were in hiding, I was just not told, maybe my aunt, I just don't know. After a while I asked if my parents are still alive and she said no. That was the answer, so there was no point in asking, so I had to hold on to what I had, and what I had was my religion. And I had these people who were nice, I was lucky the people were nice and I stayed there also for about three months by these people.

And after that my aunt came, that was about it, about a year I stayed with these strange people, three/four months in places, and then my aunt said, she came to me, and said to me, "You know, I want to show you something, but you mustn't tell anybody what you see." She showed me something a very big doll, I will never tell anybody, of course I

**Tape 2: 3 hours and 29 minutes 24 seconds**

won't. And then she took me to see my parents, at first I couldn't believe it, I could not believe it, I could see my father, my mother too, but my father and I saw them. It was no reality, I had no inkling, I had no idea where they are, I did pick up things, you know you hear things, even as a child you hear things, and then she brought my sister, it was just not real, it was just not real. I had my mother there, my father there, you know, I couldn't believe it. And then they had to make different arrangements. There came out a new law in Czechoslovakia, in Hungary, that those children who were unofficially there could be legitimised, and how they did it, they went round the law, and they, it was the Jewish community already, they worked at it and they took some of these children who were there for some time already and they brought them to the authorities as if they came out now, as if they crossed the border now, so that legitimised us.

So they took us to the nunnery, so I had to leave my parents again, and my aunt says, they didn't tell me what was there or what else I was going to, or where my parents were going to be or whatever, nothing. And she took me and my sister to this nunnery, we were there about three days, that was a most horrible experience. That was a most terrifying experience, it was like a prison there, and there were some people there, there were women there who hanged themselves at night, and the screaming at night, and then, my and my sister were scared stiff, what was going on, the nuns, and the food they gave you, you never knew what you could eat, was it kosher, whatever, it was terrible, terrible ... in my mind it was all dark, all black, all screams, all, I had no choice. What could I do? I had nowhere to run. And then there were officially that was how they legitimised us, I don't know, we were there for a few days, and after we came out of there my aunt came and she took us to Munkacevo. So now this time we were legitimate, my sister and me, so she could have a legitimate nieces in Monkacevo, you see, so she took us up to Monkacevo, and there we stayed with my grandfather in my grandfather's house.

This was about nine months before the Germans marched in, the Germans came in in May 1944, this was in winter, winter 43, I don't remember exactly when, autumn 43. During 42 I was hiding with people, and then in 43, some time in 43 and we went up to Monkacevo to my grandparents. My grandmother wasn't alive any more, she died, she was ill, but my grandfather and my aunt and my uncle and my cousin, my cousin was in Budapest, in Rákospalota, she got married, so there were two of us, my sister and me, with my grandfather and we stayed in the big house and then we were legally there. My grandfather was a very, very warm person, very, very nice and really we didn't suffer any hardship there besides not knowing where my family is. Of course they were very good to us my aunt and my grandfather, very, very nice and warm. I remember I got scarlet fever there, we had to be very, very careful, you see, not to clash with authorities, to keep out of the way of authorities, that was very important, whatever they were very, very Rishusdik, and then I got this, in those days scarlet fever was very, very dangerous, it was very catching, and you had to go to hospital, but of course my aunt didn't want me to go to hospital, because you didn't know where it would end, you could take a child to hospital you may never see it again, so I stayed at home, and I had to be in quarantine, and nobody knew about it. They didn't let people in, and for six weeks I had to be in this

**Tape 2: 3 hours and 39 minutes 4 seconds**

bedroom, in quarantine, and when they came in they were all dressed, you know, dressed from top to ... they had to wear special clothing, you don't get that today, but special clothing they had. My aunt came in, and the family, and I remember, my grandfather, he was so pleased we were there, and I used to pray there every day, and he used to come to the room, and he was told not to come, and everyday he came to see how I was praying. It meant so much to him, with all the tsoras it meant so much to him. He came in and he used to sit there and watch, at least that nachas I gave him. He was a real old man, he was a real good man, there was a lot of people came to the house to ask for advice when they were in trouble. He was a very wise man. And he gave a lot of money to people, they were in trouble, there was no parnossa, there was no, there was a lot of trouble and again and again they rounded up people and killed them by the Duna. They came there, they were very, very cruel, they were just as cruel as the Germans, very cruel, these Gendarmes, if we were out on the street we would try not to meet them at all, because you never knew what was next, it was just, they were very, very cruel. And they were very, very bad people, oh, Hungarians are very, very bad, and the Poles are very, very bad people. We suffered a lot from that, I remember we had to be very, very careful, but in the house we were safe, and we lived there, with my auntie, for nine months I lived with my auntie. First, life went on, it was sad, it was troublesome, we heard of all sorts of things happening, to the Jews, all over the place, it was very, very sad, but at least I had my family around me.

RL: How did you spend the day then?

SK: With my sister. I was studying with my sister and my aunt. She was tutoring us a bit, my aunt, and, except for when I was ill, but that is a different story, because she was

tutoring us, and we had books to read, I grew up a little bit. You know, I was a bit older, and I had my sister, and there was another family there. They had geese and they grew, and that was very interesting for us and we went to this family, and there was, you were more yourself, it was easier, you were more yourself, you didn't have to hide and you didn't have to pretend as much, you were in your own surroundings, it was easier. And time passed and we also had some sort of schooling there, not a proper school, we didn't go, we didn't go every morning, but we also had some sort of arrangement in the community for the children to go. And time passed, my aunt was very, very nice, and my uncle was very nice, I had a very nice uncle, a very kind man, they bothered, they cared about us and they spent time with us.

My grandfather still had the business but only very, very weak the business, towards the end, there was so much tsoras, there was, you know ... and as the time passes I don't think of it as being a very bad time because I had so much love around, it means so much to a person. After the scarlet fever I recovered and we had our programme of the day, and then I remember the day the Germans marched in, we rushed from the street, I don't know if I understood the full meaning of that, but I saw them march in. They marched in like they show on the films like they marched in.

### **Tape 2: 3 hours and 43 minutes 46 seconds**

And there was no opposition, we just watched them, and then everything started, then, the trouble started, there was no business, there was nothing. And my grandfather, by that time my cousin from Rákospalota came up, and she had a child in the meantime and she came up to Monkacevo and she was staying in Monkacevo.

And my grandfather decided when the Germans came in to bury some of the treasures, I didn't know about that, but my cousin did, she was much older than me, and they went out of town to a certain place and they dug very deep with another family and they buried a lot of money and gold and silver there, a lot of treasures, and they decided with a very good friend of my grandfathers, that whoever comes back should get it and distribute it to those who are left from the family, because they knew what was happening, people woke up already to what was happening in the world. And he did that and my cousin, they told my cousin as well, they didn't tell me, I was too young, but they told my cousin.

And then things started happening very quick. Pesach we were still at home, Pesach we were still at my grandfather's house, and I remember that Pesach went on as usual, you know they cooked what they could and they prepared all the food for the Pesach, the special food that they prepare, everything was as it, more or less, yom tov was more or less normal, what you could get you could get, what you couldn't you couldn't.

But after Pesach the ghetto started. That was very, very quick, that was from one day to the next. There were a lot of Jews in Monkacevo. It was a very big community, frum, not frum, very big community. And there were four streets designated for the ghettos, you know, like a square, four streets, and all the Jews had to move into these four streets. So what you did, you cut it up with people, I mean two or three people in a family, two or

three families in one flat. And we moved in with a cousin who had a flat in that street, and I remember the man, my grandfather and my uncle with another cousin. And I remember the fright really started, we took what we could, clothing and things, what we could manage, the house was left there, everything was left there. And my grandfather made a lot of money and they took a lot of money with them, my grandfather and my aunt, they needed it, but with the development of the war, what it cost, it cost us, they could save that, and then the terror started.

First of all we got into this apartment and there was no room to move because there was all these families all squashed together, and no proper food, when they took us to get food, you couldn't get out of the ghetto, it was locked, you couldn't get in or out of the ghetto, you had to have a permit, and you very rarely got a permit to go out of the ghetto, what they brought in was very little. The Germans were rough and tough and we were scared, we were really scared. Then the new rule came out, you mustn't do this and you mustn't do that, a Jew mustn't go here and a Jew mustn't go there, there were all these rules and regulations, I mean, we had this sort of thing in Czechoslovakia, I didn't tell you about that, you couldn't go to restaurants and you couldn't go to the cinema and you couldn't go to the pictures, I mean Jews were excluded from all these places. I didn't feel

**Tape 2: 3 hours and 48 minutes 35 seconds**

it so much as I was just a young child, but my parents felt it a lot. And this, you know this, we didn't have a chance, in the ghetto we had no chance to go anywhere, we had these four streets and that it, that was your world, and then the Germans decided to round up these children who were from abroad, who came from outside, because we were registered as children who came from Czechoslovakia, and there were quite a few children there who were like this, and I remember the Germans came very often to look for us. And they didn't find us. Once when we were playing in the yard, there was no problem because there was a lot of children, we were playing in the yard and the Germans came and didn't find us, they were looking for us but didn't find us. We could have come out for a glass of water while they were there. There was a little building there, and we went to the little building, we were playing, and the Germans looked for us and they didn't find us. We weren't even aware of it. My aunt, for her it was scary, they came in the middle of the night, and then they appeared in the middle of the night and a neighbour told us, that happened very often, and there was a knock on the door, the Germans are here, so what we did was, we had to go on the roof, and on the roof to the next house and then from house to house on the roof, and they were looking for us, the Germans, and all the children like that were on the roof, running from house to house. Some children they caught, and us they never catch us, and by the time we got back to my grandfather's house, where my auntie lived, the Germans went through all the houses and they left, they called through the court and they didn't catch us, that was a few times I remember, we had to go onto the roof in the middle of the night and we knew all about it, we knew what it was all about and we just, we escaped, we somehow, that is how it was, it was a miracle, when I think about it now it was just unbelievable.

It came to such a stage that it was nerve wracking, it was nerve wracking, and I, I as a child, was very much afraid that they would catch me. And I told my aunt, "If they catch me, they'll catch you and they'll catch the family. Let me go. They round up these children and send them to Auschwitz." I told my aunt, "Let me go, I can go to the Germans, I don't want you to get into trouble because of me, if they catch me then you will be in trouble. Let me go." No, she wouldn't let, of course she wouldn't let. But I bothered her so much, in the end she packed and she said, "Well, I'll go with you." Because there was no way out, I mean the Germans came to look for you very often now, you know, I didn't want to get into trouble all the people, my grandfather, and my uncle and aunt, I was afraid to get them more into trouble. I didn't know where my mother was though.

And one day two men came into the house and I look at the men, they are so familiar to me, they had no beard, I could recognise them, who are they? And my grandfather said, "You don't recognise me?" He had cut off his beard. That for him was the greatest punishment ever, he had never cut his beard, he had never touched his beard, all of his life. I didn't recognise my grandfather, or my uncle, they both came, and they had no beards. They were such dear people, such warm good people. I can see them know in front of me. "You don't recognise me" my grandfather, it broke my heart, it broke his heart that I didn't recognise him, it also broke my heart, you know that he had to cut his

### **Tape 2: 3 hours and 53 minutes 19 seconds**

beard off and I didn't recognise him. It was terrible for him I could see it in his face, he was very hurt, deeply hurt and he looked like he, and my aunt started beckoning, he is coming with us, there was this yard where the children were supposed to be taken. There was always a place in every town where they rounded up the people, everywhere you go nowadays I mean, I have been to Vienna, I have been to Venice I have been all over Europe, everywhere there is one place, one yard, where the Jews were rounded up and taken away. And the same thing was in Monkacevo, there was one place, and I saw my auntie going, she was packing, as we were going to go, and suddenly I remember a man, a Jewish man with a little beard came up, and my aunt called up and she said, "You are not going." And my aunt said that the man had come to tell her that my mother was looking for her, my mother had sent a goy from Budapest, she got hold of papers and the papers that she had were the children of that goy, and he was supposed to take, smuggle us out of the ghetto and take us to Budapest. Now the goy came three times and he was told that the children had gone, that the children were taken by the Germans, and my mother said, "Impossible, my sister would never give up those children." She sent the goy three times, and the third time he found us, I don't know how, I can't remember how, but he got to, you know, this Jew got to know about it, and he came to tell my aunt that the goy is here and he is looking for us, and we were packed luckily, and as we were packed we left, and my auntie said, she sent me to this goy and we went to Budapest and she told me that my mother was waiting. And whatever was packed was packed, and I remember how he smuggled us out, my sister and me, he had papers for the two of us, he couldn't take more, the couple was there with their little baby, my aunt, my uncle. He smuggled us out. We got out, we got out, we got out as two Christian children, we were

very blond, my sister and me, and we hung onto him. We were scared of him, he had gold teeth, we were very, very scared of him, my sister was so scared of this man, but we had no choice. Somehow we managed to get through the gates. It wasn't even gates, the Germans were standing there, there was an opening there, but you couldn't go in and out because the Germans were standing there, but somehow he arranged it, this goy, he showed the papers, and it was alright and we got out, and we got on the train with this goy. And we got to Budapest, my sister and me, we were very scared all the time, I didn't know what was going to happen and this man seemed so frightening to us, I don't know ... and there was my mother waiting for us, I couldn't have my father, my father was so scared all the war he appeared to be hidden, he was in the bunker all through these two years, you wouldn't find him on the street, he was a different type, my mother was, she had the go in her, she had guts, he was scared stiff, you couldn't let him out, and she, my mother, she put on a tichel, and she was blond, and she was confident and she was walking about as an Aryan, as a goyishe woman.

And we met her, and then my mother, she sent me back for my cousin and the baby, and then you couldn't stay any more by Jewish people, then you had to be with a goy. It was impossible, the tsoras was so great, people went around in the dark, you know. So my mother arranged for us to stay by a non Jewish lady, as children from out of town who came to town, and it was like a children's home. So we stayed there and there were another three cousins of mine who stayed there, three girls, second cousins actually, who

## **Tape 2: 3 hours and 59 minutes 7 seconds**

stayed there also as non Jews and there was one little boy there, who also stayed there as a non Jew. The cousins I knew, but this little boy, of course he thought, he was told that nobody knew he was a Jew, but he thought that we knew he was a Jew because he knew that we were Jewish, the five of us, and we never let on, because we didn't want to frighten him, and that little boy, whenever he had a bath he got so scared that nobody should come into the bathroom, he was so scared that child, don't know if he survived at the end. He was a little boy of about ten or eleven, I had such rachmonos on that child, and he didn't let on, and this woman of course knew but she had a help who didn't know we were Jewish children, so really we were not allowed to let on, we were very, very strictly by my mother.

Opposite lived a Countess, a Hungarian Countess who was a very great rasha, and we met her, and she was also against Jews, she was against Jews, she was totally against Jew and we lived with this woman. I think it was one of the hardest times of the war, for me personally, because I couldn't keep anything, I couldn't keep my religion at all, and I had to eat treifas, which I had never had until now. And I couldn't pray. So what we did was, we used to say to the woman, once a week, oh I don't feel well, each separately, that one day I should get out of eating treifas, so at least once we don't eat, we would get out of eating I should get out of eating treifas. All of us, occasionally on days, it wasn't very obvious, my stomach hurts and that. I remember that day, I remember we washed for bread, and she didn't notice. And on Shabbos we used to go into the yard and play, and we went to the very far end of the yard so she shouldn't call us in to do something on

Shabbos you were not allowed. Of course, there were many things you did on Shabbos which we couldn't help, but we found our way of keeping as much as we could, a tiny little bit. My cousins were older, and they could have prayed loudly, but you couldn't because you were afraid that, and you could have copied but we were afraid that next door should hear it, the goyter. So we reminded each other to say whatever we knew by heart, and we lived there for four months by this goyter, for six months, four months, we lived by this goyter like that. And my mother came occasionally, of course, as a non Jew. And then we had to go to the church, every Sunday we had to go to the church, that was a terrible, terrible thing for us, to go to a church, to kneel down in church, but we had no choice, I remember the way we used to kneel there as children and curse the Germans. And she used to tell us this story, the Christians history and we didn't know anything about it, and my sister was very good at that, she had a very good imagination, she said, "Oh yes, my mother told me, just tell me a little bit more." And my mother said of course, and then she added some detail, she was a young child and she worked it out, so good, more so that you wouldn't know. She always had a very good imagination, I couldn't do that, I was straight, I knew or didn't know, but she she always saved us. I had no idea because I had never heard about this different religion, about Yeshe , I never heard about that. I don't know how we used to stay by this woman, it was a very, very trying time, a very, very difficult time, I think, the worst times during the war, it was as bad as camp, because we couldn't keep anything, we couldn't keep a thing. We had to eat this treifas, she wasn't bad. We stayed there for about four months.

**Tape 2: 4 hours and 4 minutes 1 second**

RL: How did you spend your time?

SK: Well, she tutored us, she had this woman helping her and there was the five of us and the boy, so there were six children, so she did, she tutored us, every day she used to teach us, the woman and a helper, that she got in another woman to help. So we did learn, I can't remember what we learned, but we learned a few, a few maths, and sums, whatever, reading, I don't know, whatever, she tutored us then so we would be occupied during the day. And that is how the time went by. My mother came occasionally, very rarely, it wasn't ...

RL: Besides going to church did you go out at all?

SK: We went for walks, we did, we could go out for walks with them. We led a more or less normal life. I don't say we weren't scared, I mean, we knew the truth and we were scared, as children, but that wasn't, we led a normal, normal life, because they accepted us, the surrounding accepted us as non Jews. There was this woman, across the corridor, there was this woman who was a Countess, she was this Hungarian Countess, she was a terrible anti-Semite, and we had to communicate with her, we had to be nice to her, in those days children were polite. She never suspected, she didn't have a suspicion, so, as the surroundings accepted us it made it a bit easier on us, we weren't called into any police, she was official, she was like a children's home this woman, and she took us in, it wasn't like a private person, it wasn't like a refugee or whatever, and the life, besides

being scared, and not knowing what happened to my parents, I never knew from one minute to the next if I was going to see my mother again, I knew the trouble that was going on, you know you heard.

RL: Where was this children's home?

SK: In Budapest.

RL: In Budapest.

SK: I can't remember exactly where, but it was in Budapest. My father was hiding at the time in Budapest, in a bunker with my mother, but my mother dared coming out, my father looked very Jewish and he was, my father was a terribly straight man, he couldn't play this. That was him, you see, he couldn't make any business on the black market, my father, he was such a straight man, if he overcharged someone then he run after him. You know, he didn't know any monkey business, that was him and hiding for him was very, very ... you could see, and he was very, very frightened, it was his nature, you know some people were just very frightened, some people have got more go, more guts, and my mother was always the one who had the guts and saved a lot of members of my family, through this, she saved my grandmother at the end, my father's mother.

RL: You said you took on the identity of non Jewish children, what were these non-

**Tape 2: 4 hours and 7 minutes 13 seconds**

Jewish children meant to be? Were they meant to have been orphaned? Why were they..?

SK: They were from the surrounding countryside. They came into town, supposed to be tutored in town and to have a good education in town, like there had to be, special schools they used to have in those days, very much, in those days they were very much these special schools for children. I mean like nowadays you send your children to Switzerland, to educate them, especially it was like those, and they accepted us, there was a children's home for a few children, so they accepted us. And that was it, That eased it for us, that the surrounding did accept us.

It was very, very hard, but we still, we believed in G-d, and that saved you, that gave you the strength to carry on, because we saw G-d all around, wherever, you saw it all around, and you just knew that He would never leave you, and we wasn't big, He was there and the knowledge of my parents, you know, that was what gave me a lot of strength, my father was, I lived with my father very little in all of my life, but he was my strength, he is my strength.

RL: We will just stop here because this tape is about to end.

**Tape 2: 4 hours and 8 minutes 59 seconds**



**[END OF PREVIOUS TIME CODE, BEGINNING OF NEW CONTINUOUS TIME CODE FOR TAPE 3,4, and 5]****TAPE 3****Tape 3: 0 minutes and 3 seconds**

This is an interview with Sara Kraus-Lefkovits and this is tape 3.

So, you were telling us about this time with the non Jewish lady and how you felt that this was the worst time for you.

SK: Yes.

RL: You couldn't do anything Jewish really.

SK: Right, right ...

RL: Yes ...

SK: After being there for four months my mother came and she said you are going to go somewhere, and we got to leave this lady and we got to go away. So, we got ready, and my mother took us to a certain place, somebody's house, and we waited there, and she explained to us, my sister and me, that you are going to go actually to Spain, you are going to go to Spain and from Spain it has been arranged to go to Israel. That was in the summer of 44, the beginning of the summer actually, the beginning of the summer of 44. So we got ready and one day we took some clothes, we packed some clothes, and we all had to go, we went to the railway station, and there was about 2,000 people gathered there, Jews, and we were packed into cattle trucks. So we, I couldn't understand, I

**Tape 3: 1 minutes 50 seconds**

couldn't make head or tail of it, we were supposed to go to Spain and it was an arrangement with the Germans, and we were supposed to go to Spain. So they pushed us into these cattle trucks, about 70/80 people to a truck, and there was no room for anybody to lay down, it was a very frightening, a very, an experience that people don't usually have.

They pushed us all in and they locked the cattle trucks, and there were Nazis all over the place. We were standing there and waiting and waiting, and we took off in these trains, my mother and father was also there, my sister and me and a whole lot of people. Mostly not religious, but many religious people as well. And with us there was a very famous Rabbi as well. And we started moving, the train went on, and stopped, and went and stopped. At one stage we stopped and we heard we were going to Auschwitz. Of course we all had a very big shock. First we didn't know where we were going, we stopped, and

we didn't know where we were going. We left to go to Spain, we had paid the Germans a lot of money for this journey, and we were supposed to go to Spain and why there were cattle trucks I don't know why to this day, but that is how it was. And then they started discussing the men, it was stopped and we could get off there. And this Rabbi who was there, he was walking up and down praying all the time, and there were all sorts of, we heard all sorts of news, we are going here, we are going there, in the end was we were going to Auschwitz. And then we got into this truck, into the cars again, the cattle cars again, and we continued, and we stopped outside Bratislava, we stopped outside in a town. Some Jews came to greet us, to meet us, and my auntie was among them, some Jews who lived, were hidden in Bratislava in those days, and they came out to meet this train, they knew there were many prominent people on the train, and they came to meet this train and among them was my aunt. And my aunt told us to jump off the train because the train was going to Auschwitz, and I didn't want to jump off the train, and my parents wanted to get off and I said, "No I am not getting off this train, I don't want to get off, we have started to go to Israel and we will arrive." And I just didn't want to get off. My auntie had a big bag full of food, full of tins, full of tinned food, in case you are not coming off. And she gave us, we took this big green bag, a heavy bag with tins and when the train started going, so we moved on, we had a terrible journey, because, us children we could lay down, but the grown ups couldn't lay down all in one go, so half the people slept half the night and half the people slept the other half. Of course there was no conveniences or anything on the train, it was a very, very, very hard journey. We were hungry, we had nothing to eat. It was a terrible, terrible journey. We went back and forth, back and forth on these, nobody was sure what was happening, where we were going, we went back and a little forward, we didn't know where we were going, after seven days on this train we arrived in Bergen-Belsen. Of course I didn't know exactly what, no before, before we got to Bergen-Belsen, I am sorry they stopped us in the middle, in a town called Linz. The Germans, and they were going to disinfect us, it was a terrible experience.

[Phone rings in the background]

RL: Just a minute, can we wait for the phone to stop.

**Tape 3: 7 minutes 5 seconds**

SK: So they stopped in this town of Linz and they said they wanted to disinfect us. We didn't know what to expect. They took us into what looked like a factory, a very big building with huge rooms, and they put the men separate and the women separate, and there we had to undress, and we put all the clothes down and they pushed us into a big room with showers. Then we didn't know what was happening now. We didn't know if gas or water was coming out, we weren't sure what was going to come out, and the water came out, it was a terrible experience there, they cut the women's hair off after that, and that was very, very sad, there was a lot of crying, they cut the men's beards off, the men and the women, the Germans running around, you know, it was just terrible, a terrible influence on me, this unruliness, and these men and women running around and everybody, ach, it was a terrible thing.

Anyway, in the end we got our clothes back, we found them in piles and we got them back and then we got back to the train. The next night the train stopped, before we got to Bergen-Belsen that is and we had to change trains, it was late at night, we had to go from one train to the next, we had to get off one train and go to, and as I got off I lost my parents, I was very scared, because I was, they find a child they shoot, no question. My mother gave me this very heavy bag to carry, with all these tins in it which was at least food, and I lost my parents in the middle of the night, it was dark, and people are running to the other train, I was holding this very heavy bag and I was running to the other train and looking for my parents, and the way I was running the handles came off, the handles of this bag, it was very heavy, I through away the handles to keep the food, and eventually I found my parents and we got onto the other cattle train and we continued there. In the end we continued another few days and we got, eventually we got to Bergen-Belsen.

RL: Were you given any food at all ...

SK: Very little, on the way ... very little ... the conditions were terrible. Hardly any food and sanitation was impossible. It was a nightmare, this journey was a nightmare, it was, I can't even describe it and I can't even, terrible, the emotions, it was a nightmare this trip, this journey was, inhuman, less than inhuman, it was terrible, terrible ...

RL: Did anybody die?

SK: On the way, I don't think anybody died, but people definitely got ill, very ill, I can't remember anybody dying, but people got ill, it was, it was terrible, terrible. It was suffocating, they closed these cattle trucks, they locked them, they had tiny little windows, tiny little square windows, there was no air, there was no air, and inside, it was terrible. Occasionally they stopped and they opened the door and we could go for some water, but it was a terrifying journey. You couldn't sleep, you couldn't, even if you had food you couldn't eat it, it was a mess, everything was a mess, and then the Germans were walking up and down with sandwiches, all sorts of things, it was inhuman, really not human. And we got to Bergen-Belsen and then the fear of selection, in Bergen-

### **Tape 3: 11 minutes 47 seconds**

Belsen we arrived the grown ups knew already what was happening, and the fear of selection, and then no selection happened. On the way I was carrying this bag and the handles came off, I threw away the handles because I wanted to keep the food. Anyway, we got to Bergen-Belsen, years later my mother told me that in the handles was some diamonds. She didn't tell me, I was a child so she didn't tell me, it is good that she didn't tell me, I don't know what I would have done with those handles to hide them, where would I have put them. But, I couldn't be careful with them, I don't know, anyway we lost them, that is how, it is what I said, in the war we lost everything, and this went on, everything we lost. We saved our immediate family, which is much more than money,

but we lost every penny we had before the war. That is what it is, money comes, money goes.

Anyway we came there and they put us into barracks, into a camp, and what sort of camp, the camp was barracks. The barracks, each barrack was more than 100 people, and the barracks had only beds, three tier beds that is what the barracks consisted of, three tier beds, one on top of the other, with some straw on the beds and a thin blanket. The men were separate and women were separate, and you went, you know, you arrived at the camp and you went into a barrack, as many people as possible, and then came the next barrack. And that is how they placed us in the barracks, and we slept one on top of the other, you know three tier, and the men were separate. The men had separate barracks and the women had separate barracks and we had no idea, you know, we had just arrived in Bergen-Belsen, we had nothing, nobody told us anything, and then it started hell, it was pure hell in that camp there. There was no food, we got a slice of bread a day, and we got some watery something which they called soup, and that was it, and you couldn't bribe people really.

The Germans were, I can't tell, what sort of creatures these are, I don't know what sort of creatures these are, you couldn't, you, and it was rare that you could talk to them humanely. They came into the camp. The women were worse than the men, they came with dogs, and they made the dogs jump on the children. And every day we had to stand for a few hours to be counted. Actually nobody could escape from there, I mean, you couldn't escape from there, there was barbed wire all around, electrified, and there was one gate and it was locked. There was no escaping from there. And our transport was a special transport, they called it Sonderlager, because we paid the Germans a lot of money for this, so they let in the children and parents together in this one camp, they were together. And, there was no food, some things we brought with us, some people had cigarettes, and some of the German soldiers did give us things for cigarettes. We could exchange among ourselves, some Jews were so hungry for cigarettes that they would give up some of the things they brought with for cigarettes. So we could exchange, but there was no food, I mean I was so hungry, all the time, ever since, my house is always full of food. I can't bear it if someone comes in and I can't give him a meal or somebody says I want more and I don't have, since then I can't bear the thought, and if anybody comes to my house, and they say what have you got so much things for, but I can't otherwise, my freezer is full, my cupboards are full. I have got flour, I have got sugar, I have got bread.

### **Tape 3: 16 minutes 41 seconds**

I must have it, it is just a feeling that if somebody comes, it is not for myself, if somebody comes in and wants to eat, that I shouldn't have is a terrible thought for me. I must say I have fed a lot of hungry people since, I have called many hungry people into my house, I couldn't stand it, I can't stand that people are hungry. It is since then, it is such a terrible, terrible thing. And every morning you have to stand there for about four hours to be counted. As I say there was nothing to count, because nobody could escape, not with children and women and that, definitely not. And as time went on ...

RL: You were allowed to keep everything that you brought with you?

SK: They took away valuables. We had nothing valuable with us, they took that away before. There was everything taken. Once we in this place Linz where they disinfected us everything was taken away there, everything. There were some people who had sewn jewellery into their coats, into the lining, you know, but everything was taken away, we came out at the end with nothing, they took everything. They didn't pull out the golden teeth by us, they did it in other camps, they didn't do it by us, I must say that. And there was no rings or anything like that.

RL: Were you still wearing your own clothes?

SK: We had our own clothes. But as time went on and as winter came near, we got there in July 44 and of course Germany is cold, and time went on and winter came and the things started to tear. We didn't have proper coats, we didn't have proper shoes, the soles had gone, we were very cold and on the bed was one thin blanket. I must tell you we never caught a cold, all miracles, my mother had blood poisoning in the camp, and we had no doctor, there was no doctor in camp, well they didn't send you a doctor anyway. But thank G-d it cleared up, I don't know how it cleared up but it cleared up, she got rid of it, it cleared up. I used to faint everyday from hunger. I was a child growing up and my parents couldn't do anything about it. And still my father tried to keep kosher as much as he could. And then he asked the Rabbi what to do, because I kept fainting, and the Rabbi said he should give me to eat whatever he could put his hands on and shouldn't seek kosher, he should give it to me. The soup was brought in in such churns like they bring milk today. So the men took turns to go to the kitchen to fetch those big churns. And then one opportunity was that when you went to the kitchen that you could steal something, either a potato or, whatever there was, while you were there you might be putting something into your pocket, and of course all the men wanted to go to the kitchen to fetch the food. So my father's turn came and he went, and my father brought back an onion. Now, he peeled that onion and he sat down to eat it. We felt that onion in every part of our body. The onion is such a strong healthy food that our fingertips were getting tingling so since then for me onions are a very important food, because there is so much strength in it. Other than that we were hungry all the time, I mean, there was nothing to eat, no-one had anything to eat.

One of the boys became a bar mitzvah in camp, I don't know how they managed, they did manage to make some sort of a cake out of some bread, people put away the bread,

**Tape 3: 21 minutes 13 seconds**

there were families, and slice by slice, and they managed to do some sort of a cream and I remember one boy from the bar mitzvah, from the bread, his mother made this cake, I will never forget that. We had no siddurim. Some of us had a siddur with but when it came to Yom Tov we didn't have machzorim, we didn't have proper machzorim, because we didn't reckon, I only thought we were going to Spain (very bad sound here)

Cameraman: Hang on ...

RL: So you were talking about the conditions ...

SK: Of course there was no hot water. There was some cold water. The clothes and whatever you had you washed in cold water. Some soap we brought with us, we didn't get soap there, so you washed your clothes, and you had to be very careful how you dry them because people were stealing them, if you hang something out, people had nothing, so people were stealing, so we had to be very careful, when you washed something you had to guard it, so people shouldn't steal it away. Everyday of course the Germans came, that is when we were counted, for hours on end, you couldn't sit down, and the language, if you asked to sit down, they said you Hungarian pigs, and things like that, you need to sit down, the language was, the whole thing was worse, was really not human. The names they called us, the way they talked to us, you couldn't approach a person, nothing, nothing, nothing. As time went on there were certain people who did make a little bit of contact, one of them I remember asked for a prayer book, one of them, there was an old German SS man there, an old one, and he had more of a heart, you could see he had to do it what he did, but you could approach him occasionally. He brought us a prayer book I remember, and we wanted a shofar for Rosh Hashana. He brought us a shofar for Rosh Hashona, but otherwise you couldn't, you couldn't approach them, you couldn't talk to them, they weren't human, they didn't answer you, they kicked you, they, they, it was, there were no human conditions at all. And once a week they used to take you to some showers, to have a shower, and then of course you never knew if it was a shower or its gas, and we knew they were gassing people, you could smell it, we knew they were gassing people. As it happened it was real showers, and I remember when you went into the shower on the way was a building, and on the wall there were all sorts of names, and some people recognised their brother or a sister, and they knew that by that date they were still alive, it was heart rendering. Once a week we were in there, the people did what they did. You had to be very careful with your belongings, as I say people are stealing, and then they had this bag for the things was very useful for us.

They did put up some sort of a school, for the children, there were a lot of Zionists in that group and I remember going to school every day and learning, they put up these classes for the children.

There was no news whatsoever from anywhere, we didn't know how the war was going. We had no idea. There was a time, occasionally; the camp was arranged so you were

### **Tape 3 – 25 minutes 34 seconds**

within barbed wire, I don't know how big it was, it was like a big yard with barbed wire. It was like a path and after the path was another barbed wire, because there came another camp. And on the other side of the barbed wire there was a path and another camp there. On the path German soldiers, SS guards used to guard the camps.

On the one side of us was the Dutch, on the other side of us were the Polish, and we couldn't communicate with these people, we weren't allowed to. But they had it even harder than us, we noticed by the Dutch people every day there were a few people carting off the dead people, they really had nothing to eat, and if we did give them something they got punished, so it was no good communicating with them at all. Sometimes they brought them into our camp to do some work in our camp, and it was no good communicating because they got punished.

Whatever they, I remember this Rabbi who was with us, he wanted to communicate with his people, so what he did, was they stood on their part of the fence, two people, and the Rabbi stood with another person on our part of the fence and he spoke to this person through the thing, and the other person spoke to the other person, I think in the Dutch camp, and that is how they sometimes managed to communicate a little bit. And the same happened with the Polish, they were all Jews of course, they were all Jewish, in the Dutch, and people came out who were near us in the camp, to the start, and the Polish people the same.

Occasionally as time went on there were some SS officers who threw in the newspaper to our camp, because we had no idea how the war was going, because it was 44, autumn 44 and the war was sort of starting to come to an end, but we had no idea, and then these papers were thrown into the camp. Of course there were watch towers all over and you had to be very careful because if the SS got caught that he threw out the paper then he got executed. On the odd occasion he managed, then what happened was in the evening, all the men gathered in the barracks, with the candlelight, and he took the blackboard, and my father used to draw the map of Europe, he was very good at maths and geography, he used to draw the whole map of Europe and he used to explain to the people what the papers said, you know where the allies were, where the Germans were. That is how we got some of the news. That is how we heard about many of the things that happened during the war. Not everything was quite useful because they were German papers, but we did have an idea what was going on. Of course there was no radio, nothing like that. The only sign was air raids, we did have air raids, and that was the only time we could relax, because the law was that if there was an air raid the German SS had to go to the bunkers, and then we could relax because we knew there were no German soldier around. And we didn't have to be on our guard, it was the only time that we knew, and we also knew it was either American or English. We knew, you know, that they are coming, they are near.

RL: Did you know when it was Shabbos?

**Tape 3: 29 minutes 40 seconds**

SK: Pardon?

RL: Did you know when it was Shabbos?

SK: Oh yes, we knew when it was Shabbos. We knew when it was Yom Tov, and then Rosh Hashona, there was Yom Kippur, I remember distinctly Rosh Hashona and Yom Kippur in the camp.

I remember Sukkos, they took out one of the beds, the three tier beds and they put a blanket round it and they put straw around the top layer, the top bed, and that is how they made a Sukkah, and the people used to go in and make a brocha on the Sukkah. They had no lulav and esrog, they had this one Shofar, which this girl managed to get from this old SS man, he brought us a Shofar, he took it from I don't know, he took it from others or maybe he just took it because, there were a load of things around, I mean confiscated from Jews, maybe he know there were shoes, there were bags, there clothes, there were all sorts of things. So we had this one Shofar and the Rav had the Gemorrah and was learning, my father had the Gemorrah he brought with him, they were learning a lot the men during the day, these frum men.

RL: Who was the Rav?

SK: The Rav was the Satmar Rav, Reb Yoel Teitelbaum, he made a very, very great impression on everybody. I mean his prayers and his lamenting and his prayers was heard all over the camp. And even the non Jews and non frum Jews, the very, very assimilated Jews, they were very emotional when they heard the Rav. There were many said, if there is a G-d, this is it. This man prays for him, you could see that this man was pure, nothing touched him. He was so clean all the time by being in camp. He literally did not eat. The one thing, if somebody was ill they could ask for a boiled potato, in camp, and many people did that pretending and they got his boiled potato and gave it to the Rav. He would eat a boiled potato in its... without being, in its peels. Or the Rebbetzin sometimes managed to get a raw potato and she cooked it, and she cooked the peel and everything and she gave it to the Rav. That is all that he was eating. And there was one woman in camp, a cousin of my father's, she gave her daily bread to the Rav, which was a very big sacrifice, and he never forgot it, this Rav never forgot it, he promised her that when they got out he would get her married. And she was laughing, she said first let us get out of here, who thought of any future, you thought of the next minute, you didn't think of any future. And then the Rav promised her, and eventually we got out, and he married her off. And whenever this woman came to, she is still alive today, in Switzerland, her name is Rosie Rubinfeld today, a very elderly lady, whenever she came to the United States the Rebbetzin used to send her 24 red roses, whenever she came to America, from gratitude. That was a sacrifice, I will tell you what a sacrifice that was, to give her one slice of bread, to give it to the Rav every day, because that is really the only thing he ate, the Rav didn't eat anything that would effect him, I really remember that, he really kept kashrus to the end. He had such spiritual strength, it was marvellous,

**Tape 3: 33 minutes 56 seconds**

marvellous. And you know he marvellous. And you know he was the only Jew in the holocaust who the Germans didn't cut off his beard, he kept his beard all through the



holocaust, in camp, he kept a handkerchief round his face, as if he had a tooth ache, and that is how he was every day, and when we were in Linz to disinfect us he had to take it off. And there were other rabbis there and their beards got cut off, his wasn't touched. I can't explain to you, I have got an explanation, it was a miracle, there is no other explanation, they saw his beard, they let it past. He was such a holy man this man, that it was really, it was beyond any words. I knew him after the war, he was a real, real holy person this man. I know that these Zionists and these really very, very assimilated Zionists, their heart melted when they heard him pray. They wouldn't come when you called them, but once they came they said if there is anything in this world, this is it, he was so, so truthful. He prayed a lot, he prayed a lot for us that we should be saved.

RL: Did you have any candles?

SK: Pardon?

RL: Anything to light?

SK: We had candles and we used to cut them up. My mother brought, and she used to cut it up so, Friday she used to cut up just a tiny little bit, just to light the candles, that we had, but nothing really, as far as religious requirements went, my father had tefillin and Boruch Hashem he had tefillin all through the war, but that was all, I mean he didn't have any other religious requirements, we couldn't, he had a Siddur, he brought a Siddur with him, everybody had a Siddur, those that were torn were torn, those that were taken away were taken away, that people had. But nothing else of, we didn't, we didn't come prepared for a long stay anywhere, we were sure that we were going to Israel, and we paid a very lot of money to the Germans, that was the arrangement with, what was his name, Nach ... the one who was killed in Israel, I don't know ... it will come back. In Hungary they negotiated this, and this was an arrangement was for a very lot of money, they needed rubber, in those days they needed rubber for the tanks and for the aeroplanes and that, and that was what we gave him, and for that they took just under 2,000 Jews and promised to take them to Spain, Spain was neutral at the time, so they treated us a little bit different to the other inmates.

Also there is another thought was that they wanted to show the world that some Jews do escape, it is not true that they are killing the Jews. So eventually we were exchanged for German soldiers, at the end of the war, that some Jews did come out. This was there ... anyway, when I remember the camp, I remember one big dark place that is all, there was daylight, there was sunshine, but I can't remember it, when I remember camp. I can't bear any bars on windows. I can't bear any dark, I am not afraid of the dark, I don't mind dark at night, but not when I am in a place. I can't, darkly lit places, I hate that, I think it is just not fair on people, places should be lit bright, I can't bear anything, you know, when the light isn't strong enough, it is just from camp, I can feel it, because this mood

### **Tape 3: 38 minutes 5 seconds**

comes down on me, you know. On a Shabbos, I like the place to be bright, I am not

afraid of anything, the truth is that I am not afraid of anything, since then there is nothing that can frighten me, because I know there is a G-d above and what happens is what he wants. They can't frighten me any more, or anything, I am not afraid there will be a war, I am not afraid to go to Israel, I am not afraid of anything, I am not afraid of the dark, I just dislike it, because it brings back camp. Because I remember camp, I think back of camp as being a big, dark place, and the hunger, the hunger was, nobody should be tried with hunger, it is terrible, terrible. Thirst is worse, I must tell you, thirst is worse than hunger, but both are very bad but you die from hunger.

RL: What was the sanitary arrangements like there?

SK: Well, there were outhouses and there were holes in the ground. These were the sanitary arrangements. And the poor Dutch people had to come and clean it. They brought them to clean it. And once, we wanted to, we saw their plight, and when we did want to give them something, and they were caught, and they were so punished it wasn't worth it. They had a terrible, terrible time, many, many of them died, the Dutch, more than the Polish even. We saw every day the carts, they took the dead in carts, and carting them out like flies, I remember, I was a child there standing and watching and seeing, they carted them out, it was terrible, they died of hunger, it was not human. One of my cousin's parents, the father came out and she died there. Whatever they show you in a film and whatever they tell you, you can't imagine what it was. You know, people said it was terrible, and I say no, what you saw was nothing. It was, it was horrible to live in these conditions, ours wasn't the worst, they didn't take babies and smash their heads to the wall like they did in other camps.

There are some people who died, elderly people who couldn't stand it. There were a couple of babies born in camp. And one woman, and they had to keep their babies in their beds of course, there were no cots. And one woman, nebach, at night she lay on the baby and the baby died. That was an experience I will never, never forget. She was broken hearted, she had this child, and since then I have never fed a child in bed, never. Also my children too, you can talk, I mean they don't know Boruch Hashem the experience but... And as I said there were elderly people who couldn't stand, they couldn't stand in any conditions. The hunger and not the cold, it was very cold, it was very, very cold in Germany. It was snowing, it was freezing, and no shoes, and no proper coat, and no proper clothes, you didn't get anything of course. From the Germans we got a big nil, no doctors, nothing. You couldn't request anything, there was nothing.

After my father stole this onion he was always very afraid of the Germans would notice. I told you, my father wasn't a very brave man as such, he was much too straight. And one day after this accident, this incident, he was called by the Germans, and he was sure he had got caught, he was called by the German Command for something or other, and he went to the Rabbi. The Satmar Rebbe and he told him about it, and he said, "Probably they caught me", and the Satmar Rebbe said, "Don't worry, they didn't catch you, go,

**Tape 3: 42 minutes 26 seconds**

they didn't catch you, don't worry." My father was scared stiff, he went and they asked, and he went to the High Commander in the camp, and what they asked him was to translate some sort of letter. I don't know what letter it was. He was a very, my father was a very learned man, he was a very, you know, very clever and learned person, and that was all, they asked him to translate a letter. So when we saw him come back, of course it was a relief, it was a very, very big thing.

RL: Who was in charge of the camp?

SK: Pardon?

RL: Who was in charge?

SK: The Germans.

RL: Who?

SK: There were some people who were the leaders of the camp but amongst us, there were no leaders towards the Germans. We had arranged, sort of, there was one person called Kastner who arranged the whole thing, but he wasn't with us, he arranged this in Hungary. And Eichman, with Adolf Eichman he arranged it with, and he stayed in Hungary, and he was forced, they didn't want to take the Rabbi, he was too religious, and they didn't want, they only wanted Zionists. And why they took the religious people on this trip, because of the money, they paid a lot of money. And the Rabbi, they were forced to take the Rabbi, somehow or other they were forced, and people were happy because they said with the Rabbi, there was more of a chance to survive.

RL: Who, you say, amongst the Jewish people, there were people in charge ...

SK: Yes ...

RL: Do you know any by name?

SK: Who was in charge there ... ? The Freudiggers and others I can't remember ... the Freudiggers were in charge and the others I can't remember, maybe Bloom. I am not so sure any more, and there were some, they were not the frum ones. I didn't really mix much with the non frum people there. There were some people who were sort of ... with the Germans they were all Nazis, only Nazis, we didn't have any kappos or anything like that, in our camp they didn't exist. We had the Nazis, the Nazis were over us.

RL: What did the Freudiggers do? What was their role?

SK: Nothing much. You couldn't request anything. You couldn't communicate with the Germans; there was nothing you could ask for. There were people, somebody who

**Tape 3: 45 minutes 0 seconds**

you could discuss, or turn to, you could not. There was one incident if you needed someone, and even then it didn't help much, I will tell you about that later. We did need somebody in charge, but it didn't help, there was nobody really in charge. It was us, you know, we sort of, we did the best we could, we survived, we survived the best we could from day to day, that is all I can tell you, that was really, it wasn't life, it was survival, it was plain, plain survival, it was, except for davening which we had, there was nothing through the day. You know, one day passes after the other, you know, cold at night, cold in the day.

RL: How was the day organised? What was your regular day?

SK: You got up in the morning and you stood up to be counted, and that took until lunch time, because they had to stand up at 8 o'clock but it could be twelve or one by the time they arrived, so there was no choice but to stand there. When people asked for a chair they wouldn't grant it, you couldn't have a chair, the Rabbi somehow got a chair, I can't remember the story how, but, in the end they let the Rabbi sit on a chair, because he also had to come out and be counted every day. And, and, that was until lunch time, this took until dinner time.

And then there was arranged this school. We went to this school and we learned some Zionist songs there and we had some lessons there, I remember, not religious lessons but we had some sums and some reading lessons and you know they arranged a school, there were quite a few children, they arranged that, but other than that I was with my parents, there was nothing else, nothing much else, the day passed and, we strived to survive. It was no use looking for food because there was nowhere to look. That you couldn't, unless you went and stole somebody's something, there was ... you know, and we got plenty stolen, we didn't, you know, we weren't that sort of people, that would go and you know touch anybody else's. I know my mother put away, my mother was very, very clever in certain ways and she always managed to put something away somehow. And where could you hide it? Under the pillow, under the ... there was nowhere to hide, and I remember things were stolen. The food was gone, which was much more than money today.

RL: What happened with the tins that you brought?

SK: Pardon? The tins ...

RL: The tins ...

SK: Well, first of all, the tins, some of them were exchanged for different food. Some were very useful, some days we literally had nothing, you know they sustain us, as I say you were hungry all the time, you really were hungry the whole time, there was no feeling of fullness at all. We were very ill when we got out and we started to eat. When we realised we mustn't eat. Eventually we got out, and we were so ill, we had to very,

**Tape 3: 48 minutes 32 seconds**

very gradually we had to start eating, because some people got, some people died from the food afterwards because they were not used to it. So, and then occasionally you had to wash some clothes, and you washed that, and you had to guard the clothes, because some people complained they got stolen. And then the time passed, and the men were learning, I mean our men, and the other men, I don't know, our men, mostly were praying or learning, our men have always got this option. Whatever book they had, some knew it by heart, they knew the Siddur, and of the Siddur there was some scriptures, and as I said the Rebbe had a Gemorrah and my father had a Gemorrah. Religious men always kept occupied, and that is how the time passes.

And you hear the news occasionally, when you got the news, that went round, that was very important for us, the Rabbi also asked about the news, he was told every day by somebody, the news we got, he was told every day by somebody. He wouldn't come to these gatherings; he was very secluded, he asked someone to come to him every evening if there was any news and tell him whatever there was. And that is how the days passed. And the prayer for salvation, it was ... you can't describe that, you can't describe that feeling and the fright. When the SS appeared, the fright, the way they behaved, the way they screamed at you, and the way they, with this truncheons, the way they hit you, and these dogs, for any or no reason at all, and ours was a better camp, it was just, when we watched the Dutch or Polish, you couldn't believe it, you just couldn't believe it ... and it still wasn't the worst, you couldn't, it was just, you know your mind boggles, you can't understand that a human being can be like that. You really, are not understandable, and when I hear about these things today and I don't understand, I really don't understand. I can't get it, even what the Arabs do, I cannot get it. You know I can understand you kill, I can, ... but certain things that you do, how you can bear it, in your own emotions, I don't know. I learned a lot of psychology, I taught a lot of children, and went through a lot of things, I had a lot of dealings with seminary girls, with parents, with people, but this I never understood, I never could understand how you can be so cruel. I never could make head or tail of it. You know, I explained all sorts of situations, which I did, there was a reason, in his youth, in his childhood, but such inhuman cruelty, I cannot explain it, what I experienced there, there was, for me, they are worse than dogs these people. I don't want to go to Germany, I don't want to tread on there, I don't want to speak to them, when I speak to them I don't speak their language, I speak their language perfectly, but not to them. I don't want to give them the satisfaction. If you tell me, I say it's not true, I didn't live through that, it just, unfortunately it was one of my worst experiences, it was terrible.

Anyway, one day we heard that we were going out, and we also couldn't believe it, because we never knew what you were going out or where you were going. They tell you they are taking you out, where are they going to take you? We heard the news that we are going out, and we couldn't believe it that we are going, and we couldn't, and then there was, we heard we are going to Switzerland, this altogether we couldn't believe, I mean, it was not, you know, feasible. And then suddenly they came and says pack, we didn't have so

**Tape 3: 53 minutes 23 seconds**

much to pack, and there we were, all in a group, and we were taken to the train station, and then we arrived in the train station and there were normal trains, this was very funny, you know, it wasn't cattle trains of anything. I mean, I couldn't make head or tale of it, whether my parents did or not I don't know. Proper trains, and I still didn't know where we were going. We couldn't believe them a word, this we knew.

We got onto this train, expecting them any minute to say, "Get off", and the train started to move, and we didn't know, we just sat there, all of us sat there like ... like pieces of wood ... we just didn't know what was happening, what was what. The train moved, and we were going ... we didn't know the way very well, but some men, they were familiar, they saw that we were going towards Switzerland, and then the train stopped, at the station, the train stopped. And the Rabbi asked one of the men to go down and get him some water, to wash his hands, it is very important the Rabbi to wash his hands. And the man asked how long they were stopping there, and they said about 20 minutes. So the men went off, and everywhere there was water, and there were wells, in those days there were wells everywhere, you know, and we had to pump the water up. And that man ran to the well and the train started to move and it was very difficult to get him in, because the train moved off, and the men ran after him and they got him in through the window, very difficult to get him in but they got him in, and then, we were on this train and then it stopped again. And the Rabbi asked again for water, so this man says, I am not going, so another man, said, "I will see how long we stay and if we have got enough time I will go." They also told him half an hour, so he said ok and he took some cup and he went off, and of course the same, and the train started moving, and the man ran after the train but I didn't see him come on the train, and my father saw this and he, being my father he couldn't bear it, and he pulled the cord, every train has got a cord, you know, and of course, you weren't allowed to do that, and the train stopped, and it was the middle of the night, late evening. I was sleeping at the time, it was very late ...

RL: This tape is about to end now.

**Tape 3: 56 minutes and 50 seconds****TAPE 4****Tape 4: 56 minutes 55 seconds**

This is the interview with Sara Kraus-Lefkovits and it is tape 4.

So, you were telling me about the train journey ...

SK: Yes, this man, who didn't come back on the train, and my father saw it, so he pulled the cord, and when the train stopped, and the Nazis came up, and they started screaming, "Who dared pulling that cord?" Nobody owned up, and then my father

owned up, being who he is, he didn't want to get anyone else into trouble, and he did it, he owned up. The next thing, they started screaming. I woke up, I was sleeping at the time, I woke up in the middle of all this, and they started screaming, "How did you dare? You have got no authority, this is a German train. How did you dare pulling that cord?" So my father said, "A man might have been under the wheels of the train."

#### **Tape 4 – 58 minutes 0 second**

"So what if a Jew dies, for a Jew you dare to..." They marched him off the train, he had nine SS surrounding him, and they marched him off the train, the SS all surrounding him, nine of them, and they marched him off, and in the far distance there was a barrack of some sort, a building, a barrack, and they are marching him there. The train was stopped meanwhile and my mother started screaming, she started screaming for the leaders from the camp, there was no leaders, there was no one to scream for, and she started screaming, they should come and help, they have taken my father away, and she went to the Rabbi, and she talked to the Rabbi. Anyway we were standing there, standing there, and after 20 minutes we saw them marching my father back, they brought him back, and that in itself people would not believe, I could not believe they had brought my father back, and I asked him, they let him onto the train, and I asked him how ... he told them every person was so important and he was ... he somehow had some answers, and there was one man missing and they would send him on his way and you counted people so carefully and how responsible, and anyway he talked his way out of it and they brought him back. The man at the end was found at the end of the train sleeping, at the last minute he got onto the train and he was so tired he sat down and he fell asleep. That was, there are certain things that stick in your mind and you can never forget that. When they brought my father back. These Germans, they came onto the train, grateful we all were when they brought him back.

And then we moved on, and we did get some food on the way, we got some more humane food, we weren't satisfied or anything, we were that hungry, but we did get some food from the Germans; we had nothing for ourselves any more. And we did get some food from the Germans, and on the way suddenly the train stopped again, and we were nearing Switzerland, and then we heard we were going back. We were going to go back to Auschwitz, that was what we heard, and then people started to make a big noise. "What is going on? What is going on?" And then we heard that the driver of the train got a telegram from Hungary to go back, not to let these Jews out because they still owe some money or something, back into the camp. And some of the people there found out, some of the Jews on the train talked to the driver and bribed him, and they told him, they bribed him, and they said "listen, if you tell the management you got this telegram you were already in Switzerland and it was too late" and that was what happened, they could bribe him, and that was how he took us into Switzerland, we got into Switzerland. He sort of said the telegram arrived too late and he couldn't go back any more and we arrived in Switzerland.

#### **Tape 4: 1 hour and 1 minute and 57 seconds**

RL: Did people have something to bribe him with?

SK: Pardon?

RL: Did people have something to bribe him with?

SK: I suppose they promised him once they arrived. They didn't have anything left. They must have promised once we arrived in Switzerland we will see to this, we will see

**Tape 4: 1 hour and 2 minutes 14 seconds**

to that. That was what everybody knew, it was the end of the war, there was really nothing, and that was how they got it, nobody had anything on him by this time whatever there was was lost, you know, no but I suppose they promised him if he comes to Switzerland they must have arranged ... it was the end of everything ... he himself probably didn't want to go back, he had had enough, many of them had had enough, he had given up, he was afraid to give up, many of them wanted to give up ...

RL: When was that?

SK: It was December 44 ...

RL: December ...

SK: December '44 ... just before Chanuka ...

And we got such a reception in Switzerland, it was amazing. Even the guards there, the Swiss guards, they stood there with boiled sweets, now I hadn't seen a sweet for years as a child, and I didn't think of sweets, there were other things, you know, were more important, but I remember when they gave us the first boiled sweet I turned round to my father and said, "Can I eat it? Is it kosher?" These things were in my head. My father said, "Yes, you can eat it." It wasn't a kosher sweet but it was a boiled sweet, a hard boiled sweet. I had that, and the people waiting for us, they weren't allowed to come near us, there were mainly Jews came and waited for us there at the port. It was in St Gallen, in St Gallen. And the interesting thing was, until we got off the train, and we couldn't believe it ourselves, where we are ... and then, they had prepared an intern camp for us, somewhere where they had to ... I don't know, they had to disinfect us and I don't know what else ... they had to legalise us, a whole procedure, they put us into this camp, they didn't want us to fall a burden for the Swiss government either, there was a whole procedure, and all the way we marched off to this camp, there were Jews lining the way, just to see us, and we had with us in this camp some very prominent assimilated Jews, writers, politicians, very prominent, and they thought once we arrived there would be a whole delegation waiting for them, to welcome them, they were very prominent, very famous Jews, but anybody, anything anybody wanted to know was where's the Rabbi. Anybody who arrived there, "Where is the Rabbi? "Where is the Rabbi?" And they themselves had said we are not important any more, the only important person is the



Rabbi. And that is how, you know, I remember that even, I remember that even, they were so disappointed, the welcome was for the Rabbi, everybody welcomed anybody but the Rabbi, everybody was asking "Where is the Rabbi? Where is the Rabbi?"

He came to Switzerland, there was rejoicing, very big rejoicing, we decided all the relations and our relatives and all the other people, and when the Rabbi escaped, he was a real holy man, a real holy man ... and they didn't let anyone near us ...

**Tape 4: 1 hour and 6 minutes 1 second**

RL: Who were these other important people? Do you know any of them by name?

SK: I don't know. They were Hungarians. Assimilated Jews, I don't know their names, I just know, I just know there were some amongst us and how disappointed they were, that they, they weren't welcomed, and only the Rabbi. And we got into this camp and here the problems started again with kashrus, because once we were out we didn't want to eat treifos. I mean there was one camp, and in all this, and how many we were, we tried to keep kashrus, it was very difficult, so we ate some of the stuff we ate, in any case we couldn't eat, we started with mashed potatoes, a little bit of mashed potatoes, I remember my mother was so careful to give us, and then we ... and then the people started to get busy to get a kosher camp going. The people, the Jews in Switzerland and our leaders, our Rabbis, there were a few Rabbis in the camp, they started to get busy and made the authorities realise that they must have a kosher place, and I have some old letters from those years which discuss this. You know, my auntie writes to Switzerland, "Have you got a kosher kitchen already? What can we do to help it?" Eventually they did set up a kosher camp for us, and it took at least three months to release us, and they only released us if people guaranteed so we wouldn't fall a burden to the government. And I had an aunt and uncle there and they guaranteed for us, this camp was already made, in Switzerland, they weren't bad, the Swiss are not bad people, we were very, we had a very bearable time in the Swiss Camp.

RL: Can you describe this camp?

SK: It was much more, it was a proper bed, and a proper buildings and there were proper leaders, there were youth leaders there, not Jewish, Swiss, the red cross, and, they used to take us out for outings. They were very nice, they were very nice ... we had a very good time there; especially once we had our kosher section. It wasn't bad, we didn't have clothes, father had no hat or coat, we had no shoes, the Swiss provided very little, but we weren't hungry, we had what to eat, slowly, slowly, I mean it was a very slow process. I remember lying on the floor, people by the hundreds, we were so ill from the food, more ill than from the starvation, I know that some people died. They saw food and they started to gobble it up and they couldn't take it, I remember mother was so careful with us, whatever she gave us very little at the beginning. She had to, she had no choice, we would have been ill, until we got ... until the system started working, I mean the system wasn't working, right. And, slowly, slowly, but still we had no proper clothes. We had nothing really, we only had what we stood up in, we had nothing, nothing to

bring with us. And we arrived, we had letters from our aunt, she wrote, "What do you need? Do you need shoes? Do you need a coat? Do you need a hat?" We had correspondence, she wrote to my parents, What do you actually need for the children? And she sent us some books and some prayer books, and you know we really came without nothing from Germany.

RL: Was it an enclosed camp?

**Tape 4: 1 hour and 10 minutes 18 seconds**

SK: Yes ... yes ... you weren't free. You weren't allowed to go out. You had to be registered normally, and you had to be ... according to the law everything, you know the Swiss are very particular and very, you know, no, no you couldn't run around. They couldn't come to visit us the relations. We were very closed in there, until all the procedures were clarified and everything was made clear. No, we were very isolated, we could write, we wrote to my relatives letters, we wrote to the red cross, we wanted to know who had survived. You see, we came out and we had no idea of the family. And no idea how my grandfather is, my uncles, my aunts, my cousins, we had no idea all those people who lived in Europe. We knew those who lived in Switzerland were all right but the rest we didn't know. Even those we knew during the war, we didn't after the war, we were out of circulation we were in Bergen-Belsen. We had no idea, we had a lot of friends and a lot of relations, we had no idea, so what people started doing, the red cross went to the camps and kept lists of all the people who survived, and in the whole world we wrote specially to the Swiss red cross and we asked for this person, for that person, you know, have you heard of this? Have you heard of that? And slowly, slowly people came back and they told us my grandfather and my uncle were gassed the day they were brought to camp at from Monkacevo. And another one came back and said my other uncle survived for some time and then he succumbed, he died, some people came back and they told you, and it was on the lists. How we found my aunt from Monkacevo on a list, my mother, the moment my mother heard that she was alive she couldn't, she was hysterical, and then she died a couple of years later, she was ill, she came out of the camp and she was ill, she came out ill from the camp, but my mother heard that she survived, it was through the red cross, it was through a telegram through the red cross that we heard that she was alive. And then correspondence was very, very, very slow and no existence in those days. Everything was, you know, every letter was looked through and it took a very long time for the letters to come, and by the time you heard from somebody, slowly, slowly ... it took years for some people to discover that their relatives were alive. Slowly, slowly, we were in that camp for about three months. And we weren't treated badly, I mean, you know, we could survive. You know something ... they had such rachmonus, people killed themselves, they couldn't live with their past, they couldn't live with what had happened to them, I remember somebody jumped off the roof, in Switzerland, I will never forget the day, a frum Jewish person, I don't know, he couldn't take it, his family got killed or something, he couldn't take it. There were people, that is not, the miracle is that we are alright, not that those people aren't alright, the miracle is that we got out alright with all our senses and everything, that is the miracle. And we were in that camp for about three months.

RL: How did you spend your days there?

SK: They were structured. I mean there was the Red Cross there, and they were structured. We had some lessons and we went on outings and it was all within the, you know under their supervision, under their, but they were structured, it was more normal, it wasn't ... we didn't have to hide, it wasn't life and death, and we could live more or less a normal life, so they already arranged it, there was a programme for the children.

**Tape 4: 1 hour and 14 minutes 29 seconds**

And my mother, she cooked for the camp, she was a very good cook and she cooked for the frum community, she cooked. Everybody had their jobs and what to do.

And after three months we went to Zurich, and my auntie vouched for us and she took us into her flat my aunt and we stayed with her for a few months in Switzerland. Slowly, slowly, we had nothing, my father really couldn't start a business, we had nothing, we got a few clothes, and we got from the red cross a few clothes, and slowly we looked more human, we had coats, my father had a hat. Can you imagine a Jewish person without a hat? You know, it was just, slowly, slowly ... a business my father couldn't run, there was no money to start it with even, we lost everything.

And the money that my grandfather hid in Monkacevo, I told you, my cousin who also survived the war, she went back to Monkacevo, the place, to get the things, they had all dug out. She asked the other family if they had found it, they didn't know anything about it. What can you do? You can't tell them there might have been a mistake or something, we had no evidence. We lost everything, we never minded, my mother never minded, for me that I had parents was everything. Who had parents in those days? Who came from the continent ... who came from Europe. Nobody had parents, and I had my parents ... I was ready to suffer anything to have my parents. Really, nothing meant anything without my parents, so what we lost we lost, I have learnt in life, you know. We survived, you know, thank G-d we have the family, we have children, grand children, great grandchildren, bless them, who would have thought in those days, I never felt sorry for that never, never in my life ... I was thankful for what I have got the children and that is what I have got, that is my treasure. We stayed with my aunt from May, April we came there, January, February, March ... in March we came to my aunt, March or April, and we stayed until September.

RL: What did you do during that time?

SK: I went to a school. We were enrolled in a Christian school. There were no Jewish schools. We went to ... we had to go to school on Shabbos I remember. In Switzerland there was school on Saturdays and we had to go. There was a girl, a Christian girl who collected my books, and took them to school, and I had to go to school every Saturday morning. I didn't have to write, but I had to sit there, and she brought my bags home. We went to school, we had a more or less normal life then. I mean, things were still

difficult to get, things were rationed, even in Switzerland, what we had was good, we had a bed to sleep on, it was good. A piece bread to eat, it was really good. I mean, we didn't expect much.

And then, we were there, by my aunt, and then came the opportunity for us to go to Israel, my parents took the opportunity and we went to Israel. We went by train, from Zurich we went by train to a place called Bali in Italy, it is in the very south of Italy, the very south of Italy, and there, we got there, the whole transport, those who wanted to, some people stayed in Switzerland, but most of the transport, even the Rabbi.

**Tape 4: 1 hour and 18 minutes 50 seconds**

And from there, there was a boat, it was a large boat that went officially into Israel, it was Palestine at the time, it wasn't Israel, it was 45, it was the last official boat after the British didn't let any more boats in, and we got to Israel on that boat, and we, it was called The Wild Orange, Wild Orange was called that boat, and it was the last boat to enter Israel legally, I mean Palestine legally. After that people went to Cyprus. So we came there and we started again. Again we had there nothing. We arrived there, really with nothing, and then the government in Israel ... first of all we had to be in a camp, there were all the legalities and that was cleared.

RL: And how was the camp?

SK: The camp was in Atlit, there is a place in Israel called Atlit, exactly where it is I can't remember, it is called Atlit. We arrived there, of course there were a lot of Zionists that we didn't want to know about. Those non frummers who came to catch us, we really didn't want to know about them. They were Yidden ... but they tried to get everybody assimilated ... my father ... we weren't interested in them. We went there, and from there again I had an aunt in Tel Aviv, and we went to that aunt, and she had a room and a half with three children, and she took us in.

Then we went to a children's home, my sister and me we went to a children's home. There was no room anywhere, my father couldn't keep us, he had no flat, so the government arranged for these children to go to, there weren't many children who came with parents after the war, they arranged for us to go into children's homes, religious children's homes, Agudah, and we were put in a children's home in Jerusalem and my parents were in Tel Aviv by this aunt, my brother was born there, in 46, and then the government gave us a flat, like an apartment, a room and a half, on the outskirts of Tel Aviv, a room and a half with a shower and a small kitchen, and my parents moved there. We were still in the children's home, my sister and me.

RL: What was it like in the children's home?

SK: What was its name?

RL: What was it like in the children's home?

SK: It was very nice, it was run by frum people. It had its rules and regulations of course, but it wasn't bad. I will tell you one thing, nothing was bad, once I came out of camp and had my parents, everything was good. I had no complaints whatsoever. There were a lot of children there in the children's home, from back home, from Hungary, Czechoslovakia with no parents, me and one other friend, out of all these children had two parents. It was no different what you had and what you didn't possess, you knew you had your parents, and that was it. You didn't want anything else, it was good,

**Tape 4: 1 hour and 22 minutes 35 seconds**

you had what to eat, no question, you had what to eat, but even that wasn't important if you had your parents. It was true you weren't at home, but you knew that you could contact them, you knew they were there, you knew where they were, you had them, that feeling alone. I wish my children would know. I wish children nowadays should know what it means. That you had your parents, we take it for granted, very much for granted, that is the world today I suppose, they have a different outlook.

For me my father and my mother meant everything, if they wanted something, there wasn't a thing I wouldn't have done for them, I was fourteen. As I say my father couldn't keep us, I was fourteen and a half when I started to work and I gave my pay packet to my father closed, whatever I earned I gave to my father closed and he gave me some pocket money out of that, that was it. I didn't even dream otherwise, whatever pleasure I could do for my parents I did. I never needed anything, I never demanded anything. My parents were the greatest treasure in this world. I was in the children's home for two years. I went to school there. I didn't know the language, I could read and write but I couldn't speak Hebrew, but I learned very quick, once I knew the reading, we learned quick, children learn quick. I went to school there.

RL: Which school did you attend?

SK: Chorev, it was called Bet Sefer Chorev. Penimyat Chorev was the home and the school was also called Chorev, it was all Agudah. And we had very good teachers, I learned the language very quick, and when loved school, I always did, and that was my first schooling, that was when I started schooling, and, it was still a very good school.

They took my sister home a year before me, and this I didn't mind whatsoever, I didn't mind at all, I understood, they couldn't, what you can't feed you can't feed that is all, I was very mature, and he is talking to me mature, and I didn't mind that he took her home earlier, I didn't mind one bit, as long as I know they are alright. My father started a little bit in business, there is nothing to start with ... I had an uncle in the United States and he sent him a bit of money and I have an uncle in Tel Aviv who had a little bit of a business and my father couldn't make black business, that was the trouble, and in those days there was only black. My father couldn't, eventually I got home, I helped him a bit, from carrying the stuff from place to place on the black market, that was all that I could do,

slowly, slowly, my father did. As I say I was still in school and I went to work already. When they took me home after two years in the home, in the children's home ...

RL: So were you in the home when the state of Israel was declared?

SK: No, I was home, by that time I lived at home, in 1948, by that time I lived at home. I went there in '45, '46, '47, '47 I got home to my parents, and the state was declared in 48, so we sat by the radio, listening. Each state said their votes, I remember that so well. And once it was decided we all rushed to the middle of Tel Aviv, to the middle Square, and

#### **Tape 4: 1 hour and 26 minutes 58 seconds**

we were rejoicing, such a rejoicing. Ben Gurion was Prime Minister, there was such rejoicing, dancing on the streets, we all went, we all went, and that was when the trouble started, serious trouble started ...

Then we got another war, we were involved in another war. It wasn't an easy war, it wasn't an easy time, it was a very, very hard time, there was no food, again there was no food around. Yerushalayim was worse than Tel Aviv, Yerushalayim was surrounded by the Arabs, it was a very hard time, I don't know how my mother made things, how she cooked, she made ends meet but I don't know what from, I really don't know, she was a very, very inventive woman my mother. We had Pesach and we had no chicken and no potatoes and no eggs and she made Pesach, and my father wouldn't buy anything that was allowed under the Rabbonim, they don't use beans, and that, and the Rabbonim allowed them to use that, the Sephardim use beans. My father wouldn't hear of it, came in some frozen chickens from America and my father wouldn't hear of that either. It is only Pesach; he wouldn't hear of that, he would not. Matzos, matzos were baked in Israel, so we had matzos, and I remember I went to the farms on the outskirts of Tel Aviv and I bought some eggs and some chickens, something I managed to buy for my parents, very little, we had no potatoes, it was very hard to make Pesach, but we did, Boruch Hashem we managed to make Pesach, we had a kosher Pesach and we were together, and we didn't eat any chometz. You know, in those days we were grateful for that, we didn't need all these trimmings, we just did what we needed, very little food, my parents especially, they couldn't make ends meet, they had no business, and I was happy going to school, I loved school. I went to sem, high school and sem, I learned in the afternoon in sem and in the morning I was working.

RL: Which sem did you go to?

SK: It was called Beit Hatzivot Mizrachi, it was a Mizrachi sem, it was an excellent sem. And I learned a lot there, it really was excellent. Of course my father was against it, because it wasn't an Agudah place it was a Mizrachi place, but I had no time to mix with all the youngsters, I had no time to mix with people because I was working in the morning and after school we had homework and that was six days a week, we had no Sunday there. And I never went out, I helped at home, my mother had no help, so I had

no time to mix with anybody. I just studied, I just enjoyed my study, and I enjoyed work, and I was helping, I brought some money home, and I enjoyed that, I was satisfied, I had my parents ...

RL: Did the war affect you in any other way other than the food shortage?

SK: Of the .. ??

RL: The war, did it affect you in any other way? Did you witness any fighting or ... ?

SK: You mean ... ? Which war ... ?

**Tape 4: 1 hour and 30 minutes 39 seconds**

RL: The War of Independence.

SK: No, it affected me in such a way that when I would walk on the street they had these, not bombs ... these ... not from the ... how do you say it in English? Bullets, these bullets are passing me sometimes, this is not an air raid, and now I am going to school, my parents didn't want me to go to school but I wanted to. And I used to go to school every day, and it was quite far, and I was ... and bullets used to pass you and they could have gone into your head but somehow, you just went, you just walked, some people didn't go to school, but I wanted to go to school. And there came an air raid and I hid under the ... under the house or a bridge or something I remember, I hid there, I wasn't scared, I was not scared, I am telling you, after the war nothing could scare me, after the brutality of those Germans nothing could scare me any more.

Scared of what, of whom, there is one G-d, what is there to be scared of? A bullet either hits you or it doesn't, you don't walk into a bullet on purpose, it either hits you or it doesn't, right? And there is nothing to be scared of, except of doing a sin, there is no such things for me. There are unpleasant things, people shout at you and it is horrible, I hate that, I don't like it, I can't bear it, if people aren't pleasant, but that is their nature, but I am not scared, after what I have seen in the war, the miracles that G-d did, there is nothing to be scared of, except of sin. Really, that is my outlook, that is my outlook. I am asked if I am going to Israel, of course I am going, I wouldn't go walking among the Arabs, that would be stupid, you know, no, the war wasn't pleasant, I mean there was very little food, it isn't as though we were starving, we had what to eat. I knew what starvation means and what not starving means so it isn't ... the war affected me greatly, it did, because of the starvation, and you can't get it out of your bones the fright, the initial fright, that feeling of fear, you can't get it out of your bones, it is there, but in the Israeli war I was so proud of our soldiers, so proud. We were independent, there were no goyim to bother you, there were no goyim to bother you around, to scream at you, our soldiers, they were so, they were so different to today, we all felt one for another, there was such a unity feeling, such a, we felt so much one for another in those days, all one knew was .. unlike today...

Now it wasn't an easy time, it was a very hard time. My father wasn't well after that, it affected him, the war affected him, with nerves, it affected him, the whole procedure, and then after the war he wasn't able to make any business, he was a very proud man my father. And he suffered from that, he suffered greatly from that because he couldn't make it properly after the war.

RL: What was he trying to do that you helped him with?

SK: Textile ... textile ... and in those days they were looking for textiles, especially men's suiting. But you couldn't get it as normal, only on the black market, and he used to deal in that. I had an uncle who did, an uncle who came from Britain actually, to Israel,

**Tape 4: 1 hour and 35 minutes 12 seconds**

so I had connections, and my father used to meet him, but my father was scared to take the material, the fabric, to the customers. I wasn't scared for me it was nothing, so I used to deliver the goods for him, and all sorts of other things like that. My father was such a straightforward person he couldn't, he couldn't stand it, he couldn't stand a lie, I mean, you couldn't lie to my father because he was ill, he never used a bad word, I never heard a bad word from my father, for him it wasn't in existence a lie, he was very straight, very, very, very straight, really through and through, so he couldn't do the black market, so I had to help him, thank G-d I could. I helped in many other things, sorting things out, yes, thank G-d I could do that, I mean, I did help my father, as little as I was with him. I mean, I got home from the children's home, I was home a few years, not very much, four or five years and I got married.

I came to England, my parents sent me to England because I went through the war, all my life was war, and they wanted me to see a normal life, so they sent me to England. So that is how I came to England, in '53.

RL: Up until then you were just working with your father?

SK: No, I was working in the school, I was teaching. But in my spare time I took for my father the materials for the business he had, I took it from A to B, I took it through, and I helped with other things, arranging things, and you know, I think people, there were things to sort out in offices and things like that, and whenever I could I helped my father.

RL: Which school where you teaching in?

SK: It was a Beis Yaakov school in Tel Aviv, I started in the Beis Yaakov school in Tel Aviv.

RL: And where were you living at that time?

SK: At that time I was living on the outskirts of Tel Aviv, and it was called Yad Eliyahu, and then we moved into town, into Tel Aviv, and then I worked in Rishon



Lezion in another school, Rishon Lezion. I was still learning in seminary, I was learning in Rishon Lezion in the morning, I came home and I went straight to school, and then I did my homework ...

RL: What age were you teaching?

SK: At that time I was teaching kindergarten. Age five, six ... a little higher ... they went to kindergarten until the age of six and that was the age I was teaching, later I taught older children, and later I only taught older I had no patience any more to teach young ones. And that was in Israel, it was a very hard time, it was a very nice time, I was with my parents. I was home, you know, nothing to my soul . I mean I had one Shabbos dress and that was it

**Tape 4: 1 hour and 38 minutes 37 seconds**

I was very happy, I didn't need anything, I had my parents, and then I met a husband in England ....

RL: How did you feel when they said they wanted to send you to England?

SK: My father wanted it so I went. Whatever my father said I did, there was no two ways about it. You know, my father said it would be good for me to go, and so I went. Of course I missed them very much, but we had very frequent correspondence, and somehow, no, I accepted it, what my father said went, all of my life, the worst thing I didn't miss was settling in Israel and I met my husband, my future husband and he was from England, and my father wanted us to settle in Israel, my husband had a business in England and didn't want to go and it was the only time when I refused my father, which was a pity, I didn't go back, I didn't stay with them

RL: So when was it you came to England?

SK: Pardon.

RL: What year did you come to England?

SK: I came in 53, just after the coronation of the Queen. I came in August, the coronation was in June wasn't it, I came in August.

RL: How did you come here? How did you travel?

SK: A boat. In those days aeroplanes were very expensive, so you couldn't, I came in an Israeli boat, it was a very nice journey, I came here by boat, I was by family, I was in Manchester for a year and a half.

RL: Who did you come to?

SK: The Liebermans. I don't know if you know the Liebermans here. There was some family Lieberman in Prestwich, I came to the family Lieberman in Prestwich.

RL: Were they relations?

SK: My aunt, my father's sister.

RL: How long had they been in England?

SK: They came right after the war. They were in ... what was called the camp in Czechoslovakia, not Buchenwald ... Was it Buchenwald? I can't remember now ... I have been there now lately ...

**Tape 4: 1 hour and 40 minutes 50 seconds**

RL: Theresienstadt?

SK: No ... Theresienstadt ... Theresienstadt ... yes. They were saved .... My grandmother, my aunt was in Theresienstadt, she survived there and eventually they came to England and the settled in Manchester. And I came to them ...

RL: What did you think of England and Manchester?

SK: I liked it, I very much ... I had a lot of friends here ... I met a lot of girls, they were very, very, very good friends and I loved my aunt, I was on very good terms with my aunt, still from home from before the war, and I was on very good terms with them. And I worked here, I taught her, at the Jewish Day School in those days, I taught here and I learned English and I liked it. I liked it here in Manchester and then I met my husband and ...

RL: Where did you learn English?

SK: Here, in Manchester.

RL: In a college?

SK: I went to a college, yes. Evening classes, in evening classes I learned English, yes, because everyone spoke English I caught onto it, it wasn't difficult, I learned a bit of English in school in Israel, a bit of English, I never really learned it in school ... I was a bit ... and I learned the language, it wasn't difficult, I made some very good friends.

RL: Where did you daven?

SK: Where did we daven? We davened in Prestwich ... in the Shul ... What do you call the Prestwich Shul? There was only one Shul there ... he was the Rav there ... Rav Shneebalg, what did you call it at the time? Rav Shneebalg, his father was still alive, he

was dieing here, he was the Rav in Prestwich, I don't know what it was called ... the Prestwich Shul was it called? That is where we davened. Sometimes we came to Machzikei Hadass, there was nothing else here. There was Broughton ... what was it called? That wasn't our Shul. Machzikei Hadass was in Prestwich our Shul. And that is where we davened mainly, and I met my husband, but that is another story, I don't think I can go into that now, but, he was the most wonderful person you could every meet.

RL: What was his background?

SK: The same background as me. Hungarian background, but, you see, if I tell you about him, you will think I am exaggerating, but I am not telling you enough. He was truth itself, he was so truthful this man, he was such a nice, gentle, bright person, I met

**Tape 4: 1 hour and 43 minutes 38 seconds**

him for ten minutes and I knew that was it, really. Because he was so straightforward. I felt he was, there wasn't, there was just one way, there was only the Torah way, and that is what I felt, I tell you I didn't know him more than a quarter of an hour and I knew. But I knew a lot about him before, we made enquiries, we didn't just go out with boys. We made enquiries and I heard very nice things about him, and then I met him I felt this truthfulness in him, it was as if I had known him all my life, and I knew he was a big learner which I was also looking for, very much, and he was a businessman ...

RL: What was his name?

SK: His name was Eugene Kraus, Yaakov, Yaakov Kraus ...

RL: And how had he survived?

SK: In Hungary, he survived in Budapest all the years, you know there was this vaded house, I don't know if you have heard of it, under the red cross, he survived there. And then he was taken into Munkatabor. Have you ever heard of Munkatabor? The work ... where they took the men to work, in Hungary they took them to fields to work, he was there, and all sorts of miracles happened to him. He escaped from here and escaped from there, and he was nearly caught here and he escaped, you know, how most people, that is how they survived, in Hungary, he was in Budapest in one of these houses, like Sweden, like the red cross, they had these houses which were looked after by Sweden or the red cross and that is how he survived, and also he was taken to work, but he survived, he had a blessing from the Belzer Rav, which, very, very possibly contributed to it, but he survived, his parents did as well, he was lucky that way. But he was, you know after the war, he got ... what do you call it what you call it of the lungs? What do you call it? Anyway .. he was ... Boruch Hashem he got better, it wasn't easy, but he was a very, very unique person.

RL: How did he get to England?

SK: He came, you know Dr Schonfeld bought him, right after the war Dr Schonfeld bought him here, he was the youth leader. He went to Sunderland Yeshiva, he learned five years in Sunderland Yeshiva. And when I met him he was already in London and he had a business.

RL: What was his business?

SK: He had a laundry ... cleaning ... cleaning ... cleaners. He was a most special man. He was good, he was kind, fervently religious which was very important for me, very firm, and there wasn't a person who didn't love him. When we needed to arrange with the bank, we sent him to the bank manager. He got on with everybody, he was just, I am telling you, because if I talked to his friends today they all tell me the same story, I was just very, very lucky to meet him, very lucky.

**Tape 4: 1 hour and 47 minutes 5 seconds**

RL: Where did you marry?

SK: Where? In Israel. My parents were in Tel Aviv at the time, and we were married in Tel Aviv, Rosh Chodesh Nissan, yes we got married in Eretz Yisroel and we came to live here.

RL: What year was that?

SK: '55 I think, March '55 we got married, and he came, after Shevuoth in the year '55, and we settled and I started working, I taught in Yesodei Torah in London ...

RL: Where did you live?

SK: We lived in Walgrave Avenue, Stamford Hill.

RL: Stamford Hill.

SK: Walgrave Avenue it is called. He had a house there, number 44 Walgrave.

RL: And how did you find London?

SK: Well I had a very hard time, because I had hardly anybody here but I had a wonderful husband and that helps. He was the most wonderful person, and it wasn't easy, I had a cousin here, but we lived in Tottenham, today Walgrave Avenue is in the middle of ... we were out of the ... you know ... in Tottenham, very few people lived in Tottenham at that time. But he was such a good man, he just, we never had a first day or a first hour or a first year, we didn't have that, from the first going it went, and we were together for 31 years.

RL: Was there much of a Jewish community in Stamford Hill.

SK: Yes, there was a Jewish community, and we were a little bit out of the, you know we were within walking distance from the Jewish community, it wasn't in the middle like today, today it is all over the Jewish community, but yes it was, oh yes ... I had a cousin here and we contacted my cousin and my aunt in Manchester and yes, it was nice, we had Jewish shops, not like today, but we couldn't get everything in those days, it was already, you know, it was after the war, it was ten years after the war, and Yesodei Torah was already, the school was already functioning. There weren't many other schools in those days, since then have grown, but yes ... I found it difficult, because I was very alone, it was very difficult with small children on my own, I had no help in the beginning. My cousin, it was too far to go to him with the children and that, but I managed, at the time I got help, things improved, it was minor hardship, as long as I had him, he was so good, on my own, and, you know, I didn't have this and I didn't have that, but I didn't mind, I really didn't mind.

**Tape 4: 1 hour and 50 minutes 0 second**

RL: Which Shul did you belong to?

SK: At that time he davened in Yesodei Torah, and then he davened, he actually where we davened was Rav Henschel Padwa in Cazenove Road

RL: Where?

SK: Rav Chanoch Padwa in Cazenove Road, 78 Cazenove Road, that is where we ended up. We knew Rav Chanoch from Israel, he was the Rabbi of Kedassiah in London, Rav Henschel Padwa he was the rabbi of Kedassia and I knew him from Israel and we got very friendly since Israel and we davened there and I felt like I was family with them really. He speaks very nice; he is not alive any more Rav Padwa. I don't know if you heard of him, Rav Chanoch Padwa a wonderful, wonderful man, clever, very clever, very bright, you could talk to him about anything, he was one of those you could talk to, you know. Listen, we went through very hard times, he had no parnossah in the beginning, but somehow, as long as we were together and the children were well gesund zu heit.

RL: Did your husband continue in the cleaning business?

SK: He did for a while, it didn't go, we had it not in a Jewish area and we had to close early on Friday and obviously the goyim got their money on a Friday and all their shopping was on a Friday afternoon and Saturday, you know. He didn't have it easy, he had it very hard, but I worked, I taught, I did bring in some money and somehow we survived, with G-d's help.

RL: What did he do after that?

SK: He did all sorts of things. In the end he had a business of selling travel goods, and that took off a bit, travel goods, and that took off a bit ...

RL: Where you able to teach even whilst you had the babies?

SK: No, I stopped and I had my, after I had my oldest I stopped, until my little one went to school, she was three, so Hannah was at the time four and a half, so for four and a half years I stopped, but as soon as the little one went to school I went back to teach.

RL: When were your children born?

SK: My oldest was born in 56, May 56, and my Yossi was born in November 57 and Gitty was born in June 60, and after that I went back to work, I always wanted to but I didn't want to leave the children at home. By then I had help an au pair girl and I managed to go back and I enjoyed it greatly. I was principal in Lubavitch for 17 years, after that, which I enjoyed greatly.

**Tape 4: 1 hour 52 minutes 58 seconds**

RL: So you moved from Yesodei Torah to Lubavitch?

SK: Yes ... yes ... they asked me actually, they asked me, when I stopped work after having the children and I wanted to go back, Lubavitch approached me, would I come in. I knew there was, the headmaster, I knew him from Manchester, so he knew me, he knew that I could teach. The school just opened, Lubavitch and I enjoyed it, it was very nice, it was a very nice experience, I was there for seventeen and a half years, and I liked it very much.

RL: Was your husband involved in the community?

SK: No, my husband was a very private person. He was a very private person my husband, no he sat and learned. He went to business, and other than that he sat and learned, he wasn't much of a social, he did, he had a lot of friends, and we went to friends and friends came to us, and we had a lot ... but he wasn't really social ... he wasn't that type.

RL: This tape is about to end so if we can just stop there.

**Tape 4: 1 hour 54 minutes 08 seconds**

**TAPE 5**

This is the interview with Sara Kraus-Lefkovits and it is tape 5.

RL: How do you feel that you settled into England and life in England?

SK: Besides missing my family, my parents especially, I was very happy in England. It took some time to get used to it, life in Israel was different, it was very nice to grow up in

Israel, it was free, it was nice, you know, school was nice, we made a lot of trips, the people were nice. In those days you were also very idealistic, everybody was idealistic, you came from such a background, with so much fear, so much ugliness, and you were free, you know you could come ... you could go ... in the beginning, mind you, I was afraid of every policeman on the street. When that passed ... we were free, we were free to walk the street without anybody setting dogs on you, or anybody screaming at you, or anybody arresting you any minute, you know it was just, the freedom itself was just wonderful. Many of us were idealistic, everybody was ... we could have other things on our mind, it was such a different world, you came from such a place, there was so much rotten in your life and you came here, and you just wanted it would be a good world, everybody did, you just wanted it to be good, you wanted people to be good, you didn't want to see the ugliness any more. So everybody was idealistic, the soldiers were so idealistic, the day they went to war I, many died, it was very hurtful, very painful ... it was just ... the feeling was wonderful, the feeling of freedom, whatever we had to eat we had to eat, it didn't really matter, we were not hungry, there were no luxuries, but it didn't matter, you could do very well without luxuries, not luxuries physical or food, as long as you got your religion. There was nobody to disturb you from keeping Shabbos,

**Tape 5: 1 hour 56 minutes 35 seconds**

from eating kosher, you know, religious wise you could do whatever you felt was right to do. Other than that, we had our needs, we lived on bread on butter, so what, you know, it was just a different world, you came from somewhere where these things didn't exist and you know what life was all about, in different ways of life. Your memories of life was different, you didn't need another dress and another dress, it didn't matter, as long as was tzniuskik , you know, you had your sleeves and you had your stockings and that was alright. You wanted to look neat and you wanted to look nice, for Shabbos, and on the street you wanted to look neat, of course, but you didn't need all these luxuries, who would want them, as long as you had the people you loved around you and nobody bothered you, you lay down in the evening quietly.

RL: You know this feeling of freedom when you came to England? How did you feel here?

SK: Here? ... It was all right. I had my family, I was very, I was very well received by the family here, as I told you before the war there was a lot of love in the family, so when I came here they received me with a lot of love, my aunt, my cousins, I was really received very nicely here in England, and I was working, which I always loved, I studied English which I also loved. I was satisfied in my life and it just developed nicely from then, I made good friends, here in Manchester, lovely girls, very nice girls, still today there are a few of us my age, most of them live here, and sincere and nice girls, and you know ... I missed my family, especially my father, my father was very, very close to me and I was very close to him, there was no subject that I could not discuss with him. And I missed that, but we wrote very often, in those days we couldn't use a telephone like today, because all you had to, you had to prepare these calls, you had to order them and until you got them, you couldn't have a real conversations, but we wrote a lot. I have got

all the letters from my father I kept, beautiful letters from my father. He was such an extraordinary person, he ... all his letters are full of advice and warmth and teaches you about life, you know ... very nice letters. Also mistakes which were made, he corrected them, when spelling mistakes or any other he corrected them, which was very nice. I accepted it all, because I knew him, he was just perfect.

RL: What language did you write to him in?

SK: Well, my father wrote to me in German, he didn't want me to forget the German language, which I am not very proud of, but I know German. In the family we spoke a lot of German and we still speak a lot of German, and I read German, so my father wrote to me in German and my mother wrote to me in Hungarian and to my brother and sister I write Hebrew, with them I correspond only in Hebrew. I mean, it would be funny otherwise, you know the three languages are very easy to me, and English of course, and Yiddish now, Yiddish I have learned recently. I love the Yiddish language, I love it, as I say most of all I love Hebrew. The Hebrew language is so rich, I don't think there is another language as rich as Hebrew, it is a beautiful language if you study it and if you know it, it is a beautiful, beautiful language.

**Tape 5: 2 hours 0 minute 33 seconds**

RL: Coming onto Stamford Hill – What kind of community was in Stamford Hill in those years?

SK: There was a lot from my background, a lot of Hungarian Jews, a lot of them my father's cousins, a lot here in Stamford Hill, you know all the generations. A lot of them are not alive any more, the community was very nice and very close, not like today, very close knit community, because there were not so many people. You walked out into the street and you knew everybody, so the community was a very close knit community, today it is different, but it is different everywhere. Here and in New York, everywhere it is different, kneine hora, the youngsters are growing up, and you know, although it was very nice. I had my difficulties with no parnosa, you know, and then ... but as I say, these were difficulties that you could live with, they were not life threatening difficulties. You know there was a G-d who looked after you, at one time they were going to kill you, they were going to let a dog onto you, for attention, we had difficulties, so all right, G-d will help ...

RL: Did you ever come across anti-Semitism here?

SK: I myself never saw it in England, I know of men who did more than women. I didn't have it in England, I can say I did not, really ... I didn't dress in such a way either, but I didn't, I know men who had problems, but I didn't, mainly in the park sometimes they used to shout after you, but they were youngsters ... so it didn't bother me ...

RL: What kind of problems did the men have?



SK: The men had problems with the beard and the peyos, they cut off peyos, young boys who came home from the park, some boys called them and cut off they peyos, or shtreimels snatched, the hats or the shtreimels, stones were thrown, bad language was used. This I heard, the bad language, it didn't bother me, I was used to it, this didn't bother me, men more, they are more outwardly recognizable you see. And they say Vienna has a lot of it but I never felt it, if I went to Vienna, I have blond hair, and people don't realize, I don't have any problems.

RL: Did your husband wear a shtreimel?

SK: No, my husband now wears, but my first husband didn't. No he was very, he was more Hungarian like my father used to be, he was very heimishe Hungarian, he wasn't a Chassidic Jew, I knew Chassidism from my grandfather, in Monkacevo, he introduced me to this very great warmth of Chassidism, very great warmth, I felt that the Rebbe was a wonderful thing, especially for the youngsters.

RL: Did you become a British citizen?

**Tape 5: 2 hours and 3 minutes 42 seconds**

SK: Yes, yes, and how, of course I did, and when I got it they were very proud to give it to me, I must tell you, really, they came out to me from the government, and they said, I applied after some time, not straight away, "Why didn't you do it before?" he said to me "You taught our children, why didn't you apply before", I had such a nice response, it was very easy and I am very proud of my British passport. I used my Israeli passport for a long time because I didn't want to throw it away, I thought, you know I am because Jewish, I knew there were problems, not so much abroad, in Israel, with an Israeli passport it gives me problems, the British passport is the best passport I could have, wherever I go they look at it and they don't, nothing, they let me pass, yes, I found out, I don't really use American, I use my British passport, I like it.

RL: How long were you here before you applied for it?

SK: I was here for some time; I was here about ten years ... being a proud Jew I didn't want to get it. I had an Israeli passport, I never had trouble on the continent, then I went back to Israel and they made me trouble there. At least I had it, I didn't want it any more, I am very comfortable with this British passport.

RL: In terms of identity, how would you define yourself?

SK: In what way?

RL: First of all, nationality, how would you describe yourself?

SK: Oh I don't know, I am Jewish, that is my first reaction if you ask me, I am a Jew. That is first ... I don't mind being English, but no, for me there is nothing else, you

know, there is me and my religion and my G-d and my truth, that is my, that is what the scriptures taught, that is the underlying basis of your life, to be good to other people, and this is the truth, because if you pretend to yourself it is no good, if you pretend to others it is also no good, so there is no other way, be true to yourself, that is the only way.

RL: Coming on to your children, where did they go to school? Can you just take me through their growing up and where they went?

SK: My children, yes, my girls went to Lubavitch school because I was teaching there, and they were very happy there I must say, they were very, I was teaching there, and I became the head mistress there, so the girls went to Lubavitch. My son I didn't send to Lubavitch because we are not from a Lubavitch home and I didn't want him to, you know, he went to Yesodei Hatorah ... First he went to cheder, he went to a Chassidische Cheder my son, and then he went to Torah School and then we taught him privately, GCEs, in those days. We had GCEs and I taught him privately because I found he wasted a lot of time in Yesodei Hatorah, somehow it wasn't organised. I wanted him to do some GCEs and I wanted him to go to Yeshiva, so at a very early age he went to Yeshiva.

**Tape 5: 2 hours and 7 minutes 25 seconds**

RL: Which Yeshiva?

SK: He went first of all he went, he went in London Rav Chanoch Padwa and then he went to Sunderland and then he went to Gateshead and to Mir in Israel and he is still teaching. He is Magid Shiur, he is teaching in Yeshiva, that was my aim for my son, to be a learner and to stay in learning and I have achieved that. The girls are very good girls, they keep a very nice home, they were very good girls all through the years, very nice, very good girls.

RL: Where did they go after school?

SK: They went to sem, they went to Gateshead sem. The old Gateshead seminary which they loved, it is a very, very good sem, and they got married, pretty early, both of them and they keep a very nice home.

RL: Who did they marry?

SK: Well Rosa married a Viennese Boy, Hungarian actually in the name of Benedict, and she has got seven children bless her.

RL: Where do they live?

SK: Her children live in London and Manchester, some she has got not married ...

RL: And she lives ... ?

SK: In London, she is in London, she teaches in London.

RL: And your other daughter?

SK: My Gitty lives here in Manchester.

RL: Who did she marry?

SK: She married Samuel Halpern and she is a housewife here, she is very, very happy kneine hora, she has also got three married children and grandchildren, she is Boruch Hashem very, very, very happy and settled. She has a very nice home. And so has my son also, a very nice home, lovely children, all learners, lovely boys, lovely girls, really, thank G-d, I am very satisfied, Boruch Hashem, I get a lot of pleasure, G-d was good to me.

RL: Where does your son live?

SK: Pardon?

**Tape 5: 2 hours 9 minutes 34 seconds**

RL: Your son, where does he live?

SK: My son lives round the corner, in New Hall Road.

RL: And who did he marry?

SK: He married a Manchester girl, a girl from Manchester called Hannah Vogel.

RL: Where does he teach?

SK: My son is teaching here, what do they call it, that school is called, Sha'arei Torah, he is teaching here in a school, in a Yeshiva, is it called Sha'arei Torah, I think ...

He does also shaatnas, you know what shaatnas is, he does also shaatnas, he does the shaatnas of the community here, he and a friend, they do the shaatnas of the community, which is also in this line, of the religious line which I am very, very pleased about, it helps the income. The children are studying and working, yes, thank G-d they are growing up lovely, they had a very nice childhood and a good father and they had a very nice childhood. I think my children, they all, they didn't always have what they wanted, but that didn't matter, they had what they needed, and we, you know, we need what we have, that is what it is, you need what you have and that is it. I never had it, I worked all my life so I could really afford to give them a little bit of extra, which I didn't mind. I worked until two years ago, and then I had trouble with my legs and I couldn't, that is why I gave up or I would never have given up work.

RL: When did you leave London?

SK: London, I left in 89 when I married my second husband.

RL: When did your first husband die?

SK: '86, July '86.

RL: Right, and where is your second husband from?

SK: Where does he come from? He comes from Satmar itself, Satmar the community, you know Satmar, the Satmar Chassidim. He comes from Satmar, the town of Satmar.

RL: What is his name?

SK: His name is Boruch, Boruch Lefkovits.

RL: And where was he living when you met him?

**Tape 5: 2 hours 11 minutes 56 seconds**

SK: New York, New York, he met me in England but he met me in New York, he came, after the war he came to New York, he wasn't in the camps, he was hiding, in Rumania, so he survived there and he married after the war and he came to America.

RL: So when you married him you moved to America?

SK: He had a business there and he didn't want to move away, because he had his business, he had his livelihood there. So I joined him in New York, in Borough Park.

RL: And how did you find that?

SK: What shall I tell you? I prefer England. I prefer the continent, it is more to my liking, it is difficult to define, but definitely a gentle life, let's put it that way, a gentle life with a more, I find it, I am used to it and I like it, I like Europe, I like a European way of life. I like people to be polite, I like people to behave well, you know Americans are a bit ... very, very lively.

RL: What does your husband do in New York?

SK: Textiles. We are in the textile business, all along.

RL: And did you teach in New York?

SK: Oh yes, I taught in New York, in the religious schools, there I taught big girls already, I couldn't teach small ones any more. I taught high school, I mean the girls of 11

and 12<sup>th</sup> form in high school, in Beis Yaakov school. Yes, I enjoyed it very much, very much, the girls were very responsive, very nice, and I always taught Hebrew subjects, which I enjoyed, I wanted to give over the ...

I must tell you one thing, when I survived the war, when I grew up I realised that I have got to pay back, I have got to pay Hakodosh Boruch Hu back for all the good, my parents, nobody else's parents survived. And how could I pay back to G-d for what he gave me ... I decided to educate Jewish girls, and that is the way I sort of hope I repaid part of it, and I have got thousands of students all over the world. And they very often come to me and remember what I have told them, and that is my reward, I don't know, know on the video, religious girls and that gives me my satisfaction in life, I don't know, they are something to live for. I have my children and grandchildren, it fulfilled my life, I can see, I gave something back for what I got. It wasn't always happy, but when I think I owe a lot, life is life. I had a good husband and I am grateful for it, and that is it ...

RL: And you mentioned that you have returned on visits to your place of birth ...

SK: Yes, I do go, especially to Czechoslovakia, because my great-great-grandfather lies there, he was called the Chassam Sopher, and he lies there, and he means a lot to us, in

**Tape 5: 2 hours and 15 minutes 56 seconds**

the family. We conduct ourselves according to his rulings, according to his minhags, his customs, and I feel very close to him. So I go back whenever I can, I am, I visit other holy places in Israel, if I go to a town where there are you know Rabbis, but I make a point of when I am near Czechoslovakia to go to this Rabbi, and then I have got my grandparents who are also lying in Czechoslovakia, so I try to go there as well.

RL: How does the line come down from the Chassam Sopher?

SK: The Chassam Sopher, his son, his daughter, her daughter, my father. My father was the fifth generation from the Chassam Sopher. We are pretty close, my grandmother was the great granddaughter of the Chassam Sopher, so you know it is pretty close, and we keep very ... is very, my children are much further already, but what I have been told, they have been told, yes that is the Chassam Sopher over there, I don't know if it is a good picture, I don't know if it is a true life, you know they have been brought up with him.

RL: How do you feel when you go back to Czechoslovakia?

SK: Very mixed, very mixed. I had a very good life there to start with, in the beautiful town, that isn't there any more, I mean the Russians have ruined a lot there, it was a very nice, very beautiful comfortable place and the Russians have ruined a lot, but it is still quite a nice place, and The Danube is wonderful, The Danube is just beautiful.

And of course I to cemetery there, I go to the grave of my grandfather and to children, there is another cemetery, and this is all in Pressburg, Bratislava, I enjoy going, I feel near to them. I get something out of that, and I go to Israel to all these holy places.

RL: Have you been back to Hungary?

SK: I have never been back to Hungary. I intend to go back, I don't know, I would like to go back but, you know, I haven't. I have been all over Europe but I haven't been back to Hungary. I tell you, it might be due to that my first husband was afraid to go to Hungary, I don't know why, but he was afraid from the communists, but I was not, I would have gone anywhere in Hungary. I went to Czechoslovakia and he didn't come with me. When I was first in Czechoslovakia it was under the communists, but I didn't care, I just wanted to go, and there I was adamant to go, because there was my grandfather lying there, and the rest so I didn't, I just didn't go back. I would like to go to Hungary once, I haven't been there for two years hiding, I would love to see the place again, but it is not ... I would like to go and see it, many people go back there, they say it is a very nice town. It is very nice, but, I have never been, I travel quite a bit, I love the Europeans cities, I go to all the capital cities in Europe, which I love. It is nice, very nice, I like travelling, it is a nice experience to see how other people live, it is a very nice experience. You know, and if I go, I go to Israel, to my sister, and then I have got grandchildren studying in Israel.

**Tape 5: 2 hours and 19 minutes 50 seconds**

RL: What happened with your brother and sister? What happened in their lives?

SK: Well, they got married. And they have got their own families.

RL: Did they stay in Israel?

SK: They stayed in Israel, yes.

My brother is a real what they call a Sabra, he was born there, he doesn't want anything else, he was born there. He was, once he was here, he was very little out of Israel. He has got a big family and very, very lovely children, all very religious. And so has my sister. My sister has been to England and been to American quite a few times and now she is going to Bnei Brak. and she is very happy there. She has got her family and her children and her grandchildren and she is very happy there. We are all on very, very good terms, I see them as often as I can and we speak very, very often, but life goes on.

RL: Where does your brother live in Israel?

SK: Bnei Brak.

RL: Also Bnei Brak?

SK: They both live in Bnei Brak, yes. They wouldn't live anywhere else, Bnei Brak or Jerusalem. They moved there when Bnei Brak was a developing town, it developed when I came, and then it started to develop, and today it is very, very beautiful. It is very nice really, it is very nice, and then I go, my parents are lying in Bnei Brak. and I go back to them, you see for me my father is a central figure in my life, and he gave me the strength to survive whatever I survived, whatever I went through, it is on his count that he gave me the strength.

RL: Have you joined; do you belong to any holocaust societies?

SK: I do, in New York there is a society called Holocaust Survivors and I joined them and they have sort of activities and I go when I am interested in the activities. They have got all sorts of lectures and they have outings, very interesting outings, all sorts of activities, when I am interested I join them, it is a very nice community, very nice people, all holocaust survivors, except those who lead it, they are younger people, and they are very nice and they are very pleasant and you can do it what you want, enjoy it, you go when you feel like it.

RL: Did you belong to anything in this country?

SK: No, not any more, no.

**Tape 5: 2 hours and 22 minutes 33 seconds**

RL: Did you? When you are here?

SK: No, I tell you, I was involved, with something they call here, there is an organisation here that teaches non religious people. What is it called? I forget. And I belonged to them, I used to go ...

RL: Seed?

SK: Yes, seed, I went to seed. I used to belong to seed, I enjoyed it very much, and people, people wanted very much to learn and they were interested, so we gave them what they were interested in, and I talked, I talked a lot. I was teaching all the years I was teaching, I was involved. I met a lot of parents, I was involved in the life of a lot of people, their problems, you know, I was very much involved with the lives of the parents of the children. And the teachers, my teachers, brilliant girls, I was very, very involved with the whole community, very much, and I liked that, I could help people that is what it was, I could help people, and that is a lot, if you feel you can help a person with their problems. At least they can talk, once they can talk they are half way there, and yes, I enjoyed that.

RL: Did you ever receive any restitution?

SK: Yes I did, from the Germans, it was a very small amount for being in the camp, something very small, my uncle arranged it for me. I got the minimum, but I got something, I didn't go very much after it, my uncle arranged it for me. And yes, it helped somewhat, I always feel like, you know what they did, and what I saw, and what I lost, can't be, no I don't think that anybody who lived through it could ever forget or forgive. Also I am not the person who, you know, bears grudges and that, but to behave like that, worse than animals ... this is something not feasible to me, I don't know ...

RL: Is there anything that was missed out that you would like to say, you know that you would like to tell before we finish?

SK: I don't think so, what can I say, no I said it all, I had a very colourful and very interesting life with a lot of hardship but I had a lot of pleasure in life, and I met all these great Rabbis which was a great gift and a great pleasure.

RL: Which Rabbis in particular?

SK: I don't know if it means to you if I say I met the Tcsebiner Rav which was a very great Rabbi, I met a few Vizhnitzer Rebbes, which was very, very warm people, very nice people, I met the Bobover, I met the Satmar Rebbe, and various other Rebbes ...

### **Tape 5: 2 hours and 25 minutes 59 seconds**

RL: Where did you meet them?

SK: I made a point of going to see them or my father took me ...

RL: Where were they at the time?

SK: Pardon.

RL: Where were they living?

SK: Where were they living? Well, one of them was my grandmother's husband, she married the Tcsebiner Rav as a second husband after the war. He was a very dear person and we had a very close relationship with him. He just adored my father, he loved my father, and through that we became very close and he was a real big personality, he was a very, very nice and warm the Tcsebiner Rav, Rabbi Weidenfeld his name was, Phaivish Weidenfeld. He was a very, very nice person, all these Rabbis are warm and understanding, if they are a real Rabbi, a leader of people, then they try to understand you, and they are very understanding.

Also the Vizhnitzer Rebbe, the Vizhnitzer Rebbes are very warm, very, very nice, very, very nice people. Especially the older generation, they are so warm, they loved every Jew. They are the same today but it's a little bit different.



And, oh the Rabbi from Belgium, the Rabbi from Belgium, there was a Rabbi from Belgium called Reb Yankele, he was an outstanding, he died a few years ago, his son has now taken his place. I don't know what his name is, it is a very difficult name, a Russian name or something. Now he was something very special, he you came to any time, you talk to him, he listened to you, he helped you. Any worry you had disappeared once you talked to him. These people were worthwhile knowing, these people enriched your life and you learned a lot from them. The way they behaved, the way they talked, the way they, you know, you learn a lot from these people.

RL: How did you come across him? RebYankele? How did you .... ?

SK: He was living in Belgium and once my husband had a lot of boys, my first husband, and he said lets go, so I said lets go. I mean his father in law used to come to London and I knew him from there. I used to go to him in London, and then he died, that was many years ago and then Reb Yankele became Rebbe, and then my husband wanted, he had some very big worries in business, and I said let's discuss it with him, lets see what he says, and he went, he went for the day to Belgium, and it was so easy to talk to him, it was so easy and he got back and I tell you the worry disappeared, I must tell you. He told him do this, do this, do that, people just demanded things just turned right, I don't know it just disappeared I must tell you, and since then we went a lot to Reb Yankele. When my husband was ill we went a lot to him, we went a lot to him. At the end of his

### **Tape 5: 2 hours 29 minutes 8 seconds**

life he was very ill, but I still went to see him, I believe he knew what was going on, he had Alzheimer's or whatever he had, he wasn't responding but I am sure he knew what was going on. You never know what goes on behind the mind of these people you know, so I am sure he knew whatever was going on. You never know what is going on behind the mind of these people you know, so I am sure, I mean ...

I must tell you I have got a cousin who has got a child, she is in a home, and that child is like a vegetable, a girl, today she is over 30, and they thought she was just sitting there nothing, she is in a home because when she grew up they couldn't keep her at home. So one day they decided they are going to do patterning with her, they are going to ... you know ... and the parents didn't want to anymore, they tried two or three things and nothing worked, and one of her uncles was adamant and he started this patterning with the girl and she responded. She knows English, she knows Hebrew, she knows everything around her, she knows every Yom Tovim, she knows Shabbos ... but if you don't stimulate her with the patterning, she sits there not responding at all, but her mind is working, her mind is bright, I saw letters written by her, so you never know ... and I have read about these things, you never know. I don't know if you have read about these things. I have read a lot about this patterning and I have got videos about it. It is most interesting; you can't do away these people. You know there was a Chazzan Ish who I also knew, a very great Rabbi in Bnei Brak, a very great person, really, and he used to stand up in front of these people. If an ill person, a mongol, came, he stood up and he said

you never know what soul is in that person. G-d has his reasons, a person doesn't just come here, so he is a mongol, so why, G-d has got his reasons. So you never know what soul is in that person, probably a higher soul. You can't do away with these people, they are higher beings and then if you go deep you find the higher being, you have got to believe in, you have got to understand how to get there, there are some very interesting tapes about that.

RL: Is there any message that you would like to end with?

SK: A message, for people? Well, who does it go to? That is the main thing. Who does this video speak to?

RL: The wider public.

SK: The wider public ... well I believe in being good. There is nothing to replace goodness to people, being good to each other. This answers your problems, I believe so, I have never seen that somebody who is a good person should not be liked or should not have results in his deeds, I think that if you're a good person if you are good to other people, that is the world, and that is according to any religion I think, and that is my conviction. Thank you very much.

RL: Thank you very much.

### **Tape 5: 2 hours and 32 minutes 31 seconds**

#### **PHOTOGRAPHS**

SK: Well this photograph was taken at the turn of the century; on the left hand side at the top is my grandfather and on the left hand side at the bottom row is my grandmother. My grandfather is Joseph Bernfeld and my grandmother was Sora Bernfeld.

RL: And the place?

SK: The place is Topolcany in Czechoslovakia.

Now this was taken in Tel Aviv in 1954, on the right hand side on the top my father is standing, Samuel Bernfeld, underneath my mother is sitting Rivka Bernfeld, and my father's mother, he is left, that is my father's mother, Mrs Rosa Weidenfeld, and the rest are family members of my fathers.

This photo was taken in 1965, it shows my family and me, sitting with my husband, sitting on the couch with my husband, Yaakov Kraus, and he and my children, on the right hand side is my daughter Channah, in the middle is my daughter Gitty, and on the left is my son Joseph, it was taken in London.

This photo was taken in 1975 on my way to Israel on the Mediterranean Sea my husband and me on the boat deck ...

RL: And the names ...

SK: This is Yaakov Kraus and me, Sora Kraus, Sara Kraus.

This photo was taken in Israel in the Hotel Dan in Tel Aviv, it was 1982 and on it you can see, sitting on the right is my sister Ruth, next is my daughter Gita, in the middle sitting is my cousin Magda from Munkacs, the one who didn't find the gold any more, she went back to dig but didn't find it in Munkacs, and that is my mother in the green striped dress, and that is Magda's husband Willy and my son in law Shmuli Halpern, it was taken in Israel at the Hotel Dan in Tel Aviv.

This photo was taken in 1997 at the Bar Mitzvah of my grandson, Avrumi, who is standing at the back on the right, and next to him is his elder brother, my grandson Shia, and you can see my son in law standing there, Samuel Halpern and his wife, my daughter Gitty, and the rest of his children.

RL: And it was taken in what place?

SK: It was taken in Manchester in 1997. At the Bar Mitzvah of Avrumi, my grandson.

**Tape 5: 2 hours and 36 minutes 13 seconds**

This photo was taken in June 2004 at the wedding of my granddaughter Dina and her husband Elimelech. To the right is my son in law Samuel and next to him is my grandson Shaia, with my great granddaughter, Esti, and on his right is my grandson Shloimie, and if you go to the other side, at the back, on the second row from the top, behind the groom is myself, Sara Lefkovits, Sara Lefkovits-Kraus and to the left hand side there is my daughter in the second row, the first one is my daughter Channah from London and next to her is my granddaughter Miriam from London, and the rest are members of the family. It was taken in Manchester in 2004, in June 2004.

**Tape 5: 2 hours 37 minutes and 19 seconds**

**END OF INTERVIEW**