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<b>Collection title:</b>	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
<b>Ref. no:</b>	225

<b>Interviewee Surname:</b>	Marietta
<b>Forename:</b>	Marcus
<b>Interviewee Sex:</b>	Female
<b>Interviewee DOB:</b>	26 August 1929
<b>Interviewee POB:</b>	Sopron, Hungary

<b>Date of Interview:</b>	22 June 2018
<b>Location of Interview:</b>	Deal, Kent
<b>Name of Interviewer:</b>	Dr. Jana Buresova
<b>Total Duration (HH:MM):</b>	55 minutes



## REFUGEE VOICES

**Interview No.** RV225  
**NAME:** Marietta Marcus  
**DATE:** 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2018  
**LOCATION:** Deal, Kent, UK  
**INTERVIEWER:** Dr. Jana Buresova

**[Part One]**

**[0:00:00]**

*The interviewee is Marietta Marcus, in her home, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 2018.*

*Marietta Marcus, thank you very much indeed for kindly agreeing to this interview for the AJR Refugee Voices Project. May we please start with your family background, where you were born and your parents, and when?*

I was born on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August 1929.

*And where?*

In Budapest.

*Which part?*

Where I was born? I don't know.

*And where were your parents born? What are their names?*

Paul was my father, and Jenny - and you've got photos of them.

*And the family name?*

Krausz.

*And where did you grow up?*

In Budapest.

*Do you remember which part you grew up in?*

No.

*No. Did you go to school in Budapest?*

Yes.

*Was it a Jewish school?*

No. I was baptised in order to get into this good school.

**[0:02:05]**

*And how did you feel about that when you discovered you were Jewish?*

I wasn't Jewish. I didn't feel Jewish.

*And your parents, were they also baptised?*

I don't know.

*And what did your parents do? What were their professions?*

My father was working for a factory and he was keeping- bookkeeper. My mother wasn't working.

*And do you remember your school days in Budapest?*

Oh, yes. They were good. Wonderful school. I went to see the school when I went to Budapest.

*And when did you leave that school?*

Just before I came to England, before I got married. [coughs]

*And when did you come to England?*

I came to England to get married.

*In- in which year?*

I don't know.

*Was it about 19...54? It was earlier than that, must have been.*

Earlier than that.

*That was your second husband.*

What did you say?

*Nineteen fifty-four, that was your second husband.*

Yes.

**[0:04:21]**

*And what happened in Budapest to make you leave the country? To leave Hungary?*

It was my marriage...allowed me to leave. But that was my second marriage.

*But during the war, did you hide from the Nazis?*

Well, yes, during the war we lived with a family. A mother and daughter. My mother and I. My father was in a camp.

*Which camp was he in? Do you know?*

Which what?

*Which camp was he in?*

Labour camp.

*A forced labour camp?*

Oh, I suppose so. It wasn't very clear. Yes – yes I suppose.

*But you hid with your mother in a cellar?*

In a flat.

*And where was the flat?*

In Városliget. This- now all the- all the-

*In Budapest or outside?*

In Budapest.

*In Budapest. And how long did you hide in that flat?*

About a year.

*How did you feel while- when you were in hiding?*

Well, I've written about that in my book very recently – not recently, but, it's a- it's a book. It's full of happenings.

*Were there moments when you feared you would be discovered?*

Oh, yes. Yes. That's all written in my book.

*But can you describe for us now, some of those incidents?*

Yes, it was very much full of incidents. We were hiding in a flat. I don't think I can hear you. Yes, all the people were in the flat- in the cellar. It was wartime. And it was full of happenings.

*How many people were there?*

About seventy.

*Seventy people?*

Maybe. They were not Jewish.

*And did you ever go out, or did you stay the whole year in the cellar?*

We all stayed in the cellar. It was real war time. There was a man who owned- owned the- was a- an importer of oranges. An Italian. And he recognised me somewhere along the- the- somewhere along there. And that's how the other people in the cellar knew who we were. He had an- a, an orange importing business.

*Were you afraid that- when he recognised you-?*

Well, he didn't want to recognise us, but he did. And so the rest of the people in the cellar were in an uproar about doing that thing, you know, were telling them that we were Jewish.

*Did they want you to leave the cellar?*

Leave?

*Did they want you to leave the cellar? Go away?*

**[0:09:33]**

No, they wanted- by that time there was no police. They wanted to call the police for us.

*To arrest you? To take you away? Why did they want to call the police?*

Because they realised that we were Jewish, we were hiding. But this girl who was the daughter of the owner of the flat, she was the same age as I, and we were sleeping on a table. And our mothers were hiding underneath the table. And they were going to call the police, but by that time, there was no police to call.

*Do you remember which year that was?*

Yes. 1940- well I don't know when- when it was over. 1940...I don't know – '44. Something like that.

*And who brought you food in that year? What did you eat?*

**[0:10:50]**

Well, what you eat in a cellar, you- [half laughs]. Bread or something. But we were part of the family of this woman. We were eating what they had to eat.

*And how much food was there? Was it very little at that time? Were you hungry?*



No, I don't remember being hungry, ever. No.

*And were there alarms when people thought the Nazis would discover you all?*

No, they wanted to call the police, but that was war time and they couldn't find any police anymore.

*And how did you come to leave the cellar?*

Oh, the war was over. My father turned up. We just walked out.

*So you were in the cellar, in the late forties, maybe?*

Yes.

*Yes.*

Really I think you need to put in what I put in my book about that. Because it's quite a story.

*What is your book called?*

I don't know. I've got a copy upstairs.

*Was it "Survival"?*

**[0:12:36]**

Yes.

*So your book is called "Survival".*

I don't know.

*And were you taken over, or were you helped, by the Papal Nuncio?*

Sorry?

*Were you helped by the Catholic Church at all?*

No, not particularly.

*And how was your father when he came to- to you? To the cellar? Was he very ill?*

Well, he walked, they walked. It was very dangerous to walk, because some of my family was hiding in a house on the- the Danube. And the old people there were covered up in a bed- he was covered up underneath their bed, my father.

*Underneath their...?*

Bed.

*Ah-*

**[0:13:48]**

This was a very old couple, in the bed. And he was put underneath the - mattress. And then he went out of the mattress, and came to me.

*And how was he? Was he very weak?*

No, they've stolen his- his shoes, but other than that, she was- he was alright.

*And your mother? How was she?*

My mother was- wasn't there. She was in the flat with me.

*Yes, but after you came out of the cellar-*

Yes.

*- how was she? Was she ill or-*

No.

*- was she alright?*

She was alright. And we just- We just walked out. In fact the war was over. And... it was- it- I've written about that so in so- a lot of details, in my book. We just walked from the cellar to the factory where we went to live in that point. My father was bookkeeper and now he was in charge of the factory. He made friends with the Russians. That's how I got out.

*So did- did the Russians liberate Budapest?*

That's right.

**[0:15:37]**

Everybody was afraid of them, but they were quite indifferent to what was going on. We walked across- there was a- a river there. And we walked across the- I don't know what you call it. We walked across a- a river that they were occupying. We walked to some Christian friends who had some of our jewellery. And they gave us it back and also gave us some food which we haven't eaten for a long time. They were old, old friends. And they still-they stayed in the old Budapest Horthy Miklós Cir-Circle. And we went to see them. Gave us back my things. Our things. They were lovely people. But my father was with us then because we walked in an empty Budapest from- that was very lucky, because very things, very bad things happened at the bottom of- at the bottom of the mountain. And it was possible to walk from where we were, to where we went to, without any difficulty. People were hiding in their houses. It was a- a sound, it was a- under, under, under, under siege. The town of Budapest.

*In which year was that?*

I don't know what year – forty-

*Was that towards the end of the war when...?*

Ah yes. Well, yes, when the Russians were there. I remember going back to Budapest and the Russians were then very much feared, because this new Prime Minister in Hungary was anti-Semitic. And I have a very old cousin who is older than me. I don't know whether he's alive now. And- I hope he is alive- he hears this interview. But, he was seven years older than I was. And we were very fond of each other. He was a very famous ...artist.

**[0:18:50]**

*What was his name?*

[pause] I can't remember his name just now.

*Don't worry.*

He might still be there – alive. Don't- he had a housekeeper who kept hold of him.

*Did the Russians treat, or some Russians, treat people very badly in Budapest?*

Yes, they did, but I have no memory of that. My father always got on very well with people. And he was friendly with the General who was in charge of Budapest. And he got me out when I got married.

*Where did you meet your husband?*

Meet him?

*Mn-hnn.*

I met him at home, before it all happened.

*Ah, you knew him already?*

Mnn.

*Through family? Through friends? How did you meet?*

Well, I went to school after that. I was- I was baptised. My mother saw to it that I was a Catholic by the time I went to school. And that wasn't easy at all.

*Did the children in your class, did they know that you had been Jewish and baptised, or not?*

Well, we didn't talk about it.

*And what was your first husband's name?*

First husband. My first husband. That was in London. I had my first husband in London. I had two first husbands.

**[0:21:07]**

*Was it Walter Heller? Your first husband? And...*

Maybe.

*And...*

Long time ago.

*And you came to Britain in 1948.*

Yes, because Robert was here. He was getting me over. I was, by that time very much a citizen - British citizen.

*But Hans Marcus was your second husband?*

I think so. I had a lot of husbands.

*And Robert is your son?*

Yes.

*Yes.*

No, Robert's not my son.

*Ah. What is his relationship to you?*

**[0:22:16]**

Ah, well- that's quite a story. Robert was in one of those trains from Germany. He was the only survivor from his family. And was one of the children who were rescued. [becomes emotional]

*Did he come on the Kindertransport?*

He came in the Kindertransport. [with emotion] But he's- he's not a much of a relative except for what he does for me.

*You care for him.*

What?

*You care for him very much.*

Yes.

*Do you know when he came to Britain?*

Who came to Britain?

*Robert.*

Robert came when the Kindertransport came. From Germany.

*From Germany - '38. 1938, '39?*

Mnn.

*Mn-hnn. And when you came to Britain, did you work, or did anybody help you?*

I was married. I didn't work. No. I was dancing.

*Were you happy to be dancing after the war was over and hiding in the cellar?*

**[0:24:07]**

Oh, that was- hiding in the cellar, it was earlier.

*Yes.*

But after that we had this flat in the factory which was a- like all these things- were contradictory. Parquet flooring. And there was a huge... there were animals. It was- it was in the country. I mean we always lived in a flat in Budapest, in an elegant flat. But after the war we lived in this flat because he was in charge of the factory.

[background noise] Are you quite happy? Who is moving? Someone went to the loo I suppose, the best of the stories are in my book. I wrote a very good book which is upstairs. And it tells you all the stories that you ask me for.

*But Robert wanted you to be interviewed.*

Did he? Yes?

*Yes.*

I wish he would take me to Sopron with him, but he doesn't, because I can't walk in my feet- on my feet. I have broken my legs several times.

*Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.*

I can't stand.

*Have you been back to Sopron in the past?*

Yes, I must have been, because I think there are pictures of it with my uncle- relatives. I have pictures of- it's a beautiful town. It's a beautiful town, and I'm glad they're going back to see it. Robert goes back to see it.

*But did members of your family perish in the Holocaust? Did you lose family members...?*

**[0:26:17]**

Oh, yes, there's a huge cemetery there. Oh, yes. A lot of them did. The worst story, there is a man who never came back, with his wife. His daughter never came back- and never came back to Budapest. And I've forgot about him because my mother was very snobbish and she didn't want to know about him. But I went to see him after the war. And he came back from the camps with his wife, but not his daughter, Eva. I don't think she ever came back. But they waited for her to come back, always. He was the eldest of grandmother's sons. And, as I said, my mother was very snobbish about him. He was not for associating with Jews. But he- he was not very well. He couldn't walk very well.

*Was that because of the camp that he...?*

I don't know. I went to see him and his wife, but once. But that was a bit of history that is very difficult. The- the first year of the- the occupation of the Russians was very difficult to do anything or think about anything. I was quite free. But there was a bit of that- it's all in my book. I think that there is a story in a book about Berlin. That Hitler came back to Budapest. He wanted- he had some camps. He had some soldiers in the castle. And they tried to- he



tried to stay there. And that was quite a bloody thing. And it was raining like mad. And I was trying to go there, to the castle. And he was- well I didn't think he was in the castle but this book about Berlin says that he was in the castle. And then he realised he couldn't stay there. And he went wherever he went, Berchtesgaden. Berchtesgaden where he went- where he finally killed himself [sic]. But I wasn't aware of that.

*Why was it- why was life difficult during the Russian occupation? What made it difficult?*

Well, my father was friendly with the Russians so it wasn't difficult for him personally. He was friendly with the person in charge. And he got me out to England - even though I was already a British citizen.

**[0:30:00]**

*So did you become a British citizen because you married-*

Yeah.

*- someone who was a British citizen?*

My first.

Yes.

Yes.

*And what was his work, your first husband?*

Whose work?

*Your first husband. What was his work?*

He was in- he was bookkeeper for the factory where we lived. There was a lovely flat in the factory.

*So your husband was a- was the bookkeeper?*

Yes. No, my father.

*Yes, but what did your-*

No, I can't now. I'm confused about that.

*Don't worry. Don't worry.*

He was- he was in charge of the flat. And I, and I left because by that time I was British. I went by aeroplane to Czechoslovakia where they had somebody, a friend, in Prague. I stayed the night and I met somebody in the dark who said, "Be careful not to speak in German in Prague." Because they were - very threatened. That was a very sad story because she survived the war in Switzerland, this woman, who had me overnight. I'm going back- I- I went back to Budapest by aeroplane much later. It was still a frightening place, Prague.

*Was that because of the reprisals?*

The what?

*The...*

They didn't let us out-

*-anti-German feeling?*

**[0:32:15]**

No- yes. I don't know whether it was German feeling but they didn't let us out of the aeroplane. But I did get out. And I walked in the dark to the flat of this woman who was having me overnight. It was like being in the war.

*And that was 1948?*

Mnn. '49.

*'Forty-nine? That would be after the Communist coup-*

That's right.

*- in Czechoslovakia. Because the Communist coup was in February.*

In what year?

*February 1948.*

Yes.

*And those were dark times.*

Yes.

*Yes. When you went back to Hungary to visit, how did you feel? Did you feel happy to visit or did you feel a stranger?*

No, I felt happy with it, until this present regime got in, because they are anti-Semitic, as you must know.

*Yes. And-*

People didn't- in this country don't care whether you are Jewish or not.

*And... now-*

But now, yes, now. Yes, Robert has gone back to being Jewish. He's done a lot about that, but don't know. He doesn't talk to me about it, but he's taken a hand in- in rehabilitating.

*And you? How do you feel yourself now? Do you feel Catholic or Jewish? Or neither?*

Neither.

*Neither.*

Tom is Jew- is very Catholic. Tom has married his wife immediately after this all happened. And has always been very religious.

*And do you feel, if not English, do you feel more British now than Hungarian?*

Both.

**[0:35:00]**

*Both. Yeah. Do you feel bitter about the war and-*

No.

*-the events after?*

No, it was a great adventure - if you survived. I had about five different Christian names, because my mother had a girlfriend and she was my- my 'something' mother, you know, when you're baptised?

*Oh, godmother.*

Godmother, yes. I had her as a godmother. And she added another few more names to my names. That was all when I was making my entrance to the school.

*Do you have any regrets about your life?*

No- none at all. In this country have far- you probably know - have far worse memories during the war, than I had.

*How did you react to English people when you first came or how did they respond to you in- here, in Britain?*

My religion? I didn't react to my religion at all.

*No. To you-in general? Were they friendly, or...?*

Did I have anti-Semitism, you mean?

*That also.*

Oh, yes. That's everywhere.

*But were people helpful or kind to you or did they- were they nasty at times?*

No, I was nasty.

**[0:37:17]**

*In what way?*

I don't know. I always upset people. That was probably what was left over.

*Did you feel that you had to fight for everything?*

No.

*No.*

No. ...I have a friend in England, who was captured with her mother. She was trying to escape. And she was put in- she was captured and she had polio as a result of that. And she's still alive and she's still here.

*Where was she captured?*

She was put into a children's home, where she picked up polio and-

*In which country?*

In England. No, I don't know. Maybe in Hungary. I don't know. A lot of people were much worse off than I was. But she was always a Christian in terms of her religious feelings.

*And with your friends, did you adjust to life in Britain? Were your friends Hungarian or British?*

Both. I had many husbands and one of them has got a sister who's still alive. And she's very much a- a Christian in a good sense. And she's quite old. She's the same age as I am. Wonderful woman. And...

*And you are now eighty-nine.*

**[0:39:45]**

That's- nearly two- twelve- my next birthday I'm going to be fifty- fifty- sixty- seventy- eighty-

*You'll be ninety.*

Ninety. Yes – yes.

*So you have lived in Britain longer than you lived in Hungary.*

Yes.

*Is it- do you think of Britain as your home?*

Oh, yes.

*And do you feel that you gained by coming here?*

I was what?

*What do you feel you've gained? How, that you benefitted by coming to Britain? What do you value?*

Oh, yes. It's a wonderful place.

*But did you miss Hungary when you first came here? Were you homesick?*

Oh yes. Always. Always, but then a lot of Hungarians think like that.

*Is there anything that you would like to add that perhaps I haven't asked you about?*

No. I lost my power of writing and I want to write again about what happens to me right now. That's my great sadness, that I can't write now. Writing was my thing.

**[0:41:43]**

*Did that give you a lot of pleasure?*

Yes.

*Did it help you, to write about your life?*

Yes, but I'm also in pain about not being able to write about my life.

*But you wrote your book. Did, did that make you feel better, writing about your life and your experience during the war?*

Yes, very soon after I came to England, this lady who is- was my ex-husband's sister, she had us come together in- to look at my book. And I could share with them. And she was the one who got a publisher for it.

*Would you have a- a message- is there something that you would like to record for your family?*

Which family? [Laughing]

*Or, or- those close to you who might be- who will watch the-*

What would they ask me?

*No. Would you have a message for them? Is there is something you would like to say?*

I have read a lot of- I haven't written a lot of books but I have read a lot of books now that I can't walk. And- and there are millions of people who wrote about that. I wish I was one of them.

*Is there anything special that you would like to record for Robert, perhaps?*

Well, Robert has taken a lot of interest in Jewish people lately. And he hasn't talked to me about it, unfortunately. I would like to know what he's up to. He's going back with his daughter. And he will know more about it now. He's- yes. [pause] I never felt persecuted in this country.

**[0:44:37]**

*Do you value that?*



I valued it? Yes. I suppose I have valued it. But I'm a very unpleasant person, and so a lot of people don't like me.

*Oh! Oh- we can't end on that note. We have to have something-*

What?

*We cannot end on that note.*

Can't we - what?

*We cannot end on that note.*

Oh, you want a good note to- now?

*Yes.*

Well, I have been treated very well ever since I came to this country in a- many, many ways. You know, I was George Mikes' girlfriend for a long time?

*Oh, really?*

Yes. And he left his money- his, his...I inherited some- he left his money to his family but- and he left and- something for me as well. So his daughter who's his executor has left a lot of books and money from the books to me. Not a lot of it. But- and that was a very Hungarian area of my time of my life. Very much so, because he was very popular. He was a member of Hurlingham Club and they were never anti-Semitic there.

*Yes, I know the Hurlingham Club.*

What?

*I know the club, yes. And I've read your book-*

[0:46:20]

I still have- they- they have- when you get into your eighties you only have to pay two pounds a year, you remain a, a, a wi- life member. So I still get their literature.

*And how long were you his girlfriend?*

Whose girlfriend?

*George Mikes.*

Oh, many years. Many years. And I was there when he died.

*Oh, that's sad.*

Yes.

*Where did you meet him?*

Oh, I met him much earlier because he was a Hungarian and so was I. And I always knew him. But when he was free, and then we married. Then I was his wife for many years. Yes. Yes, I had- and, and I was there when he died. And that was the hospital they actually closed just- they had a hospital which is now rebuilt, where every room was dedicated to a writer. And... he died there. But he didn't get dedicated as a writer. He liked to be dedicated as a writer. Yes.

*Did you share his sense of humour?*

Oh, yes. Very much so. Yes.

*And did he draw the cartoons in his books?*

No, no. That was, that was somebody else.

*And did you read what he wrote before it was published?*

**[0:48:17]**

Well, I can't remember that because he was always- he was always in the popular- I was always popular. Yes. Yes, he was a very important part of my life. And there is a family now who visit me sometimes, who- have still got, you know, they still remain- remains attached to him. And it's a sense of humour more Jewish than Hungarian.

*It's a wonderful sense of humour.*

Mnn.

*Would you say that they were very happy times together?*

Oh, yeah. Fantastic times. What I remember is being on the tennis court. Two- two things on the tennis court. I was playing and he was watching me. Ah, yes. That's right. One of them. There was somebody playing on the next court and they were swearing in Hungarian. And- and he put his racquet on the floor and walked over. [laughs] Yes. Yes, he was deeply hurt about that in that wonderful club. And they were actually swearing in Hungarian. Yes. I'm very grateful to you right now, here, because those are wonderful memories with George. They were. Yes. He had a tennis four, an old Colonel who was always hoping to die on the tennis court. And he did.

*Oh!*

Yes. It's a bit of Britain that- I wouldn't say they are not anti-Semitic because, who isn't? But, you know, you don't feel that. Yes, so- so I had many marriages and some of them I don't remember and some of them I do.

**[0:51:10]**

*But that's- that's a happy note perhaps to end on.*

What? What did you say?

*That is perhaps a happy note, with George Mikes, to end on. Is there anything else that you would like to add or that comes to your mind that you would like to say?*

Not really. No. You wanted something nice.

*Well I- yes. The happy humour of George Mikes.*

Well, you see my family is as Jewish as non-Jewish. There is Tom who is a Christian. There is Robert who is now very much Jewish in his commitments. And it just goes together.

*Was George Mikes religious?*

George is dead.

*Yes. Was he religious?*

Did?

*Did he go to synagogue? Was he?*

No – no. No, he was much too detached and humorous to have any kind of religion.

*Well in that case, may I thank you very much for the interview?*

Well, thank you for coming. People around here are fascinated by you coming, you know?

*Aha.*

I think. No, I don't know.

**[End of interview]**

**[0:52:52]**

**[0:53:11]**

**[Start of photographs]**

[NB: It is difficult to number these, as the descriptions are partial]

*Thank you.*

Photo 1

In a class, in the 1930s. That's it.

*And this is your grandmother?*

Travelling to Brennberg [now Brennbergbánya] from horse and cart, in Sopron.

You said it. You've said it.

*[Robert:] He wants to hear it from you.*

You want to hear it from me? It's my father as a First World War soldier, in the Hungarian Army.

This is a picture [inaudible] in Budapest in 1928. If it's true.

*[Jana, prompting:] It's your mother. It's a photograph of-*

I can't- I have to see it. Mother, when she was early married to my father in Budapest. It's a beautiful picture.

**[0:54:40]**

It's me. In my Hungarian costume, is it? Yes. Aged five.

It's me and my mother at the age – I don't know. [eight]

There's somebody I knew when I was fifty.

It's a photograph of my wedding to Walter, 1949. All right?

Book. Painting was of me, when I was five.

**[End of photographs and documents]**

**[0:55:30]**