

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

SYLVIA EBNER

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Gloria M. Schwartz  
Date: February 14, 2001

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Gratz College  
Melrose Park, PA 19027

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SE - Sylvia Ebner [interviewee]

GS - Gloria Schwartz [interviewer]

Date: February 14, 2001

*Tape one, side one:*

GS: This is an interview with Sylvia Ebner for the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive and I am Gloria Schwartz. Sylvia, thank you for doing this interview today. [February 14, 2001]

SE: You are welcome.

GS: Would you please give us the place where you were born and the date and tell us a little bit about your family life.

SE: Okay. My name is Sylvia Ebner [born September 10, 1929] and I'm, my maid, mid, maiden name was Sylvia Klein and I come from Hungary and we lived in a little town in Hungary, the name is Bodrogkisfalud. It's a long name but a little town. Three, actually four, Jewish family lived in the town where I lived and I had a brother who was 15 ½ when they took us away. He was in the, in a big city where he went to Hebrew and Hungarian school. He lived there for already--but he come home for vacation and summer vacation--but he was in that school already for five years because my father wanted him to have a better education, Hebrew and Hungarian. He was taken away right from there with all the boys. It was a boy's school. I never hear, never heard from him after that.

GS: Do you know the name of the town?

SE: Yes, he was in a big city, Kosice. Kosice was in Czechoslovakia but later it became Hungary so they call it Kosice, it was a big city and we have some relatives there too so my mother figured it would be close to relatives and in a good school. My father begged him to come home March 19<sup>th</sup> when the Germans come in, they occupied Hungary, and my father begged him, "Come home, come home, be with us," and he said, "No, Daddy, I cannot go home. What would I do [in] that little village and I want to finish my education first." He didn't figure they would took us away, but my father want us to be together but he don't want to come home. He come home for Christmas vacation and *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur*, every vacation he come home during summer. He was with us for certain weeks then he went back to learn more Hebrew...

GS: Okay.

SE: ...in summertime.

GS: What type of education did you have?

SE: I have, they took me away at the ninth grade. I didn't have a chance to finish ninth grade.

GS: Ok, did you have any type of Jewish education?

SE: Yes, I was at the same city for a couple, for one year, only one year...

GS: Oh.

SE: ...in a Hebrew school because my mother and my father want me to have some more Hebrew knowledge, and that was a Hungarian Hebrew, that was a regular school, boys and girls school. I was there only one year and after that, that was 300--150 mile away from us and after that I wanted to go home to be with Mommy, Mommy, Mommy, I was mother girl. I don't want to go back no more. And I have friends where we went to, it wasn't a Catholic school, it was like a regular school, not a Catholic school, how you call it? Like here, not, not, how you call it?

GS: Like a public school?

SE: Public school, yeah, but there was a lot of Jewish kids. So when I went to the third grade we walked in two mile just because mother and father want us to be with Jewish kids together. First and second grade, I went to Catholic school because in my little village was only Catholic school and I couldn't walk the two mile, but the minute I was able to walk, my brother become third grade and I become, I'm sorry, I become third grade and my brother become fourth, then we walked in, two miles every day back and forth. We took our lunch with us, not like other children, other children lived in, not so far like us.

GS: Were there many Jews in your village?

SE: No, we just have four Jewish family.

GS: And what were the relations with the non-Jewish neighbors?

SE: Our neighbors was very nice comparing to the rest of the villages. Our neighbors know my parents, my old father, I mean the grandfather too and they respect them, and they were really nice to us but the next village, when we walked in, they were hard time to walk in because, "All right Jews, give me candy." My father have a store and they figured I can bring candy for them but how I bring the candy for them, what I get from my father every night, he worked with us, teach us, and if we know our lesson, he give us a piece of chocolate, a small piece, reward us. And my father didn't know it, I didn't eat it and my brother didn't eat it, because we cannot go into school, the kids they were bugging us, "Ok, Jews give us candy," and you have, there was only one road where we have to go through and that corner, they were always waiting for us for the candy and we give the candy for them, then we can go farther. But when you close it, I tell you further that story. I don't want to tell here what was the end of the story. Can you close it please? [tape shut off temporarily]

GS: Sylvia, you were going to tell an incident that happened walking to school and it involved the candy?

SE: Yes, my father would teach us every night instead of having a tutor. You cannot even get a tutor, so my father was teaching us every night, taking over the lesson and whenever we know our lesson or the timetable, he always give us a piece of candy or a piece of chocolate, that was the reward. But we didn't eat the candy or the chocolate because when we go in two miles and one of the corner, we must pass that road where we

have to go to school and the kids, the boys was standing and waiting for us. "Sylvie, Tibie [phonetic], give me your candy," and if we didn't give our candy, they would run after us with stone and they was stoning us, and we have to run our heart out to run faster then they can reach us with the stone. One morning--one night we didn't know our lesson and we don't have no candy to take because my father only reward us if we know our lesson, and he didn't give us candy because we didn't know our homework, and we looked at each other with my brother, what we gonna give now for the kids if they gonna come? "All right kids--all right Jews, not kids--all right Jews where's the candy?" And you always give it to them but this time we don't have the candy and we start to run. They take the stones, whatever stones was, they were running after us, they want to stone us. So one day we don't have the candy and I said to my father and my brother, I said, "We cannot go to school." "Why can't you go to school? You're not sick." "Yes, we not sick but we don't want to tell you every morning, we have to give the candy for those kids, otherwise we cannot pass by because they're running after us, all right Jews, give me your candy, and I have--you don't give us candy tonight, I can, we cannot go to school." And my father said, "Ok, look, I tell you one thing. What you have to take care of yourself. I can't be always with you. I can be never with you when you grow up. You have to learn how to take care of yourself. Here is a piece of stone." He give us a piece of stone but my brother don't want to take it and he says, "No way! No way!" he said to me, "Sylvia you gonna take it in your hand, hold it this way and when they ask, give me your candy, give them the candy, punch up his..." how you call this?

GS: Chin.

SE: "Chin, punch up his chin with this stone. They have to learn once and for all, Jews or not Jews, you are, they don't gonna get your candy because they were not working for it. You learn for it. Tonight you don't know your lesson, you have no candy and you're going to go to school." We were shaking in our boots, especially my brother, he was not a fighting type. I never fight myself either but maybe I can run faster like my brother did when they was throwing the stones, and I did it. We went that corner, we come to that corner, it was about a mile away from my house and when they asked the candy, I punched up his chin and was bleeding. I, myself get afraid because now they really gonna kill us. We were running like crazy to school, "Well, how we gonna go home? How we gonna go home because we have to take the same road to go home." There was no telephone I should call my father. Europe there was no telephone, how can I tell my father? We went all around, around, around, you know on other road, maybe other two miles, not to pass by to this corner. When I went home, I said to my father, "I did it but I am sorry, it was bleeding." So my father said, "Next time they will know not to hit you or hurt you. They have no right to hit you or hurt you." But afternoon, I saw the Joe mother and Joe come into my house and he asked, "Mr. Klein, why did you hurt my son?" He called me in. My father called me in, and although I don't want to do it, but my father said, "You must take care of yourself. I can't be with you every step in your life. If you won't hurt

him, you gonna learn your lesson, I'm gonna hurt you." So I had no choice, I just had to hurt him. And I explain it, why I was hurting Joe because he was running all the time after us, "Jews give me your candy," him and the rest of the boys and I have no candy that night because I didn't know my lesson and the mother of the, Joe mother, he was shocked, she was shocked, and she took Joe hand and he, she ask him, "Is it true?" "Yes, they didn't give me the chocolate. That's why we run after them all the time because I want the chocolate." The mother of this Joe take this child and I'm telling you with all her might, she spanked this, her son, Joe, as hard as she can, and she said to him, "Why you do that? Sylvia had the right to do it, and I don't you dare come to cry for me. She was right, and I don't want to hear it again and I'm sorry Mr. Klein, my son did that." And my father said, "I understand it's not your fault. You never teach him. I know you very well but the kids teach each other," and everything was ok after. Next time, they don't ask no more candy from us, we pass by, never again they ask candy from us. Because they were afraid they were gonna get it. Yes, what else?

GS: Did you have any friends in the class that were non-Jews?

SE: Oh yes. I have a lot of friends in the classroom who were very nice. I have a lot of friends in my town because all my friends from the Catholic school, first and second grade, they were all my friends and they were very nice. In the town itself, there were some of them who wasn't too nice. For instance, my father speaked German at that time, and there was across the street a neighbor who the mother was very nice and everybody was very nice except the son, who my father give him lesson because he went to high school already and always come to Mr. Klein to help him with the German and my father always helped him with his lesson. One Friday night we were just ready to close the store, because we were religious, and we closed the store [unclear] we pulled down the shade, there was shade from steel and this Joe came and he said, "Mr. Klein, what's that mean *kaput*?" And my hus, my father said, "You know Joe, what's that mean *kaput*, you know that word." "Yes, I know but, but we..." what you mean, "But?" "I just come from the next town," and we had a big river there across the street of the pasture and there was a Jewish kid who was coming from the Hebrew school, he couldn't go home to Tokaj, so he come down where we lived, that was eight mile in the pasture. And the Germans they went and they shoot him through the big river. They were playing who can shoot? Ten soldiers was shooting the *bocher* [boy], and they said, "It's *kaput*. That's why I tell you *kaput*," and my father said nothing because he can't tell, you should of shame of yourself to come and tell me this way. But that's the way he let us know the Germans shooting the Jews under that town. That's what that is and we went to school in that elementary school, regular elementary school and I was at the ninth grade. We went out for recess and the bell was ringing, one of the--principal actually, not the teacher, the principal said, "Jewish kids gonna make a line here and the Christian kids gonna make a line this way." The Christian kids went into the classroom all. We all the Jewish kids were standing in line from first grade till ninth grade. There was no teacher who would teach us. Not one of the teacher

would volunteer to teach us, so we were standing there till lunchtime and finally one of the teacher who was of Russian descent, we find out that time, we didn't know that he was a Russian descent. He said, "We gonna teach--I gonna teach you." And he taught the nine class from first grade, we went in all the Jewish kids in that one classroom, and this teacher was the only one who took us and teach us. The rest of the teachers, they don't want to teach us, they don't want to talk to us, nothing. When we went in to this classroom, all the kids, then we realized that we are Jews, really Jews. They hate us. If they don't want to teach us, that means they hate us. There was not one teacher, just this man and he explained it to us. He's a Russian descent and he knows what that means to be not a pure Hungarian because he was a Russian descent, and "I gonna teach you but what I gonna teach you remember but good. I expect you to learn," and he start to teach us. That was the--I still remember what he teach us, that was the first lesson. He said we human beings have brains. In Hungarian they call it a different way, we have *ész*, *ész* means brain. But animal has no *ész*, no brain. They just have *erston*, they have sense. They will remember for 15 minutes what you tell them and you have to repeat, and repeat, and repeat, that's the only time they gonna remember. That was the first time I heard that story. I never knew it, because we lived in the town and we always had ducks, but I was never thinking they have no *ase*, they have no brain, you know? That's the time--that was the first lesson that he taught. And then one day, before Easter, we cannot go no more, no more from one village to the next, and this village was where I went to school, the next village. So I cannot go no more school because Jews were not allowed to go from one village to the next village and they have to put on the yellow star. Then our--then we know who was our friend in my town, in my little town, they were spitting on us, dirty Jews, from my own friends some of them. My own friends when we put out the, when you have to put on the yellow star. Then we really find out who was my friend, who was my real schoolmate.

GS: Was that in April 1944?

SE: That's right. That was April 1944. The Germans come in March 19<sup>th</sup>. But the minute they come in, we cannot go no more from one village to the next. We were closed in to our home and then they took us to the ghetto.

GS: And where was the ghetto?

SE: Satoraljaujhely, ok?

GS: What...?

SE: That was about 50 miles from us, where we lived, but that was exactly one--next day after our Jewish Easter, next day.

GS: Passover?

SE: Passover, right after our Passover, but at Passover my uncle wasn't home. He was in labor camp and my two aunts, three aunts was there and a little girl was eight year old, her name is Katy and they want to hear the *seder*, but how they gonna hear the *seder*? My uncle was in the labor camp, one of my aunt's husbands was in the labor camp, the little girl father was in the labor camp, so we walked down about a mile where my aunt

lived and we had the *seder* at their house because we don't want all of them to walk to our place. It's very funny when all the Jews coming to one place. My father went first, then I went, my brother wasn't home, my brother was in that city, and then my mother further away from me, like we don't walk together, and then we went into the house, to my aunt house and we had the *seder*. We cried through all night. My father said this, all the *seder*, but we cried through all night because we were so much of afraid they gonna come in, the German gonna break down the door. And I was at that time 14 ½ year old and I never saw my father crying in my life, but that time I saw my father and my mother crying. I couldn't really pick it up so fast, how come my father cry? Is it really so bad? But I was shaking, because that time we cannot walk from one village to the other. I cannot go to school and I was afraid, I know that something gonna happen, and we finished up the *seder* and we walked home. It was still cold and I was freezing and shaking till we don't go into the house. It was nice. The moonlight night, it was such a beautiful moonlight night and I was so much of afraid that I couldn't wait till I go into the house, to my house, and finally we, I didn't ask my father or my mother, I don't want to ask my father or my mother why they were crying because I know why they were crying but I couldn't figure out how come this was so horrible if my father cry and my mother cry. Then come Saturday, it was between one Saturday, between--because *Pesach* is eight day. And came one Saturday and my mother stayed home. Me, my father and me, we went down to see and how my aunt and my three aunt, was three girl, three women and a little girl. So afternoon we went down with my father and when we come home, my mother was shaking and she don't know what to do. "What happened Mama?" I ask. The German came in and they pick up one of the beds from our bedroom. There was like here the two bed what goes together with a little thing, clinched together. They pick up one bed and take it away, and my mother was afraid they even gonna kill her because they went in, "Jews, give me your furniture." So my mother figured everything they gonna take. But they took one bed, only one bed for themselves. Somebody wanted to sleep in a bed and they took my mother, my mother bed, and we were, I was a child but I was so much of afraid, I was so shaken, they gonna come again and they gonna do something.

GS: What had happened to your father's store in the meanwhile? Was he able to still operate?

SE: In the meantime, we were operating, but we Jews, we were not allowed to sell flour, sugar, petroleum. None of the Jews' store, was able to sell all this stuff. In the meantime people go to shop, they don't want to shop this in my store, the rest of the things because they gonna go where they can buy the salt and everything, but my father was a, have to go back. He just come home, he just come home, he was a labor camp too. My father was in the labor camp and two weeks before Easter they let him come home.

GS: Do you know the name of the camp?

SE: No.

GS: Or where it was located?



SE: It was in Hungary, it was in Hungary at that time. And I was so happy when my father come home, and that's mean we have somebody with us, a man. My brother wasn't home, my mother and me was attending the store and we were struggling because, as I said, this business wasn't going at all. We have a garden, a big fruit garden, what my father put all the trees in--apples and all kinds of a trees. Actually we live on our own fruit and our whatever we can pick up from the garden, that's what we were living but that was already wintertime, so we saved--my mother saved some apple and some beans and potatoes. So we lived on that because the business wasn't going and we couldn't, we couldn't live just what we have at the house, because my father was in the labor camp. Two weeks before East, before *Pesach* he come home. Yeah, I was so happy, nothing could happen with me no more, my father is home. When my father was home, I felt so assured. When my father was in the labor camp, I was so much of afraid we close the door, even nobody was coming in at that time because Hungarian people, the neighbors, they don't go to steal from one another, you know? But the--we were always afraid that maybe some stranger is gonna come in, but when my father came home, I was so relieved my father is home and nothing could happen with me because he gonna take care of us. He was a very strong man, he was a very strong man, he teach us to stand our two foot. Don't walk like a *schlemiel*. When we went on that ice, I remember my father said, "Stop." I said, "Why should I stop?" "Walk, don't crawl, walk. Stand up on your two foot and keep your head up. Don't walk like a *schlemiel*." He always, he taught us to be strong, not to be afraid from nobody. Don't hurt nobody, but don't be afraid from nobody.

GS: Was he taken to the labor camp right after the Germans came in, in the...

SE: No.

GS: ...middle of March?

SE: No, years before already they, he went, he was a soldier before. He was a soldier before and then went, become to be, not a German wasn't there yet but a lot of SS, Hungarian SS was lot of *gendarme*, lot of--they don't let the Jews to go to be a soldier, they want, they put them to the labor camp and they were digging ditches and that's all what they were doing, working hard, they were not allowed to have the pistol or anything, just a shovel.

GS: So can you tell me when this was?

SE: That was in 1944, 1940--beginning, early 1942. 1942 they didn't give Jews the pistol, they just give the shovel...

GS: Okay.

SE: ...that's all and they only labor camp, working like horses, digging ditches, fixing airports, and everything.

GS: Okay.

SE: Yeah.

GS: Were you aware of what was happening in Europe?

SE: Actually, I wasn't aware. I was too young to understand, and I lived all my life in that little village, and I loved my friends, they friends love me who were close by. The rest of them later on, they show me, I am a Jew. Who was farther, lived farther up, they were throwing stone at us and spit on us, "Jews, dirty Jews, dirty Jews" and I figure to myself, "What that mean, dirty Jews? I am not dirty. I wash myself every morning, even so we have no bathroom. We just have a wash, a little room where we wash ourself in a, from a dish." But then I, I said to myself, "They don't mean dirty, they mean just because I'm a Jew." You know just because, but not my close friends. My close friends was very nice, they were very nice, but those who really don't know so close to me, you know, then they were, they know I am Jew and then when we have to wear the star, the Jewish star, you know, then they wake up.

GS: Were there any Jewish organizations for youth?

SE: No, there was no youth organization there, there was nothing, nothing. It was a little town and the next town, we have Hebrew school where only the boys went to school. My father taught me Hebrew, to read Hebrew.

GS: Ok, I'd like to get back to the ghetto. You said you were moved to the ghetto?

SE: Now wait a minute.

GS: Okay.

SE: This time it was right after Easter, after *Pesach*. The next day, since I was a little girl who helped my mother, we were washing the dishes and my mother told me, "Do a good job because a year is too long and my grandmother used to say: a year is too long and you don't know who gonna take it off [out] and I don't want them to say that was-you were not doing a good job." And I said to myself, when my mother said, who go, "God knows who gonna take it off." What my mother mean, "Who gonna take it off? Why we don't take that off?" I wasn't thinking they gonna take us away. I wasn't thinking of that, we won't stay there in the house. And all of the sudden came morning and I, we washed the dishes and we have to go on steps to bring it to... [tape one, side one ended]

*Tape one, side two:*

GS: This is side two of the interview with Sylvia Ebner.

SE: Okay, so we were, I was washed it, I washed the dishes, dried it, and I went to the steps, step ladder, how high, it was high, high there, not like here, step ladder have to go up high, and I bring up the dishes, and I just came down, I was up the step ladder and I saw my Aunt Olga come in and fall in [fainted]. We have the *sukkah*. That was the summer kitchen; the *sukkah* was our summer kitchen.

GS: Okay.

SE: Okay? And the stepladder was standing in the *sukkah* when we go to the attic, and I saw she fall in. I said, "What happened?" You know, "What happened?" I get scared. She was 24 years, 26 year old. And my father went and take a dish and poured the cold water on her and finally she come to herself, she said, "Make some food right away because the next town, Jews, they were picked up and they just marched front of our house with the *gendarme*. The *gendarme* taking all the Jews from the next town and they gonna come for us any minute but if we have some food put up fast." But we cooked with the regular stove, not gas. We had, we have wood stove and my mother got so nervous, what to cook, what to do, we have some leftover, you know, at least put it and warm it up and eat it, and we have fruit garden and every time when the fruit fall down my mother cut it up to pieces and dried it. My mother cut up the fruit and dried it and that was for wintertime, you know? Mother went and put a dish full of apple, those dried fruit and cooked it and we have some leftover, but bake, they have, we have no time to bake, they said, my aunt said, "You have no time to bake because I saw they carried just, just as much what they can carry on their back." That was around 9:30, 10:00. 12:00 the *gendarme* come and, "Let's go Jews, let's go, let's go." What they mean, "Let's go," I said to myself. "Where will we go? Well what do you mean, let's go? Where you wanna take me?" But I was afraid to ask. The *gendarme* was not like here, the police. They were with, how you call that? Feather on the, on their hat, and they know us, they know us because they every time they come to check the store it is clean or not. This time they don't know us no more. They don't want to know us no more. But when they come to check the store, years before, years before '42 that time was Mr., Mr. Klein. This time, "Let's go Jews. Let's go." And I said, "Where will we go?" "Pick up what you can pick, fast. Put it on your back." We have no valise. In Europe there was no valise. We lived in a little town. How you gonna take that few thing? Takes fast, whatever you can carry, that's all you can take. First thing was the bedding, that was the first thing. You have to take bedding, because that's what my father said, "Let's pick up some bedding and let's pick up the food what we have." But my father said, "Even if we pick up the beans and the potatoes and the flour, where we gonna cook it?" So we didn't pick up any beans and any potatoes, just what we have ready and a couple of things what we can carry with us. My fath--my mother was carrying the bedding. In Europe we had different bedding, like here the heavy bedding with the goose

down, goose down cover, you know? It wasn't bedding like here. Like here you know those blankets, those light things, it was heavy, so my mother put it on her back and my father put it on his back, and I carry what I carry in my two hands, dishes. My father said, "Shall we take dishes," you know? "Yes, take some dishes." "Ok, if we can carry dishes, then we have to take some food, potatoes or something, so we carried whatever we could. We, they took us, put us up on a, there was already a horse and buggy front of our house, and they said, "Up on the horse and buggy, on the carriage," and we went up. "Where they gonna, where they gonna take us?" We figured you know and the st--the station was just about maybe 400 steps from us but no, they took us to the third town with the carriage because in the meantime we picked up all the Jews from my town and the next town, and then they took us in the third town and picked up all the Jews around, everywhere was carriages already, you know? And they put us up on the carriage--we went about two blocks from my house, from our house--two blocks, and I looked back. I have a beautiful little dog, I always love animals, I love dogs and cats even here I have, for 32 years I have cats and dogs all the time. And I look back and my little dog was running after us as fast as he can with his little foot. He was running after us, after the carriage, because I left her there. And I said to my mother, "Why don't you stop and pick up Morzsa?" Her name was Morzsa--Itty Bitty, that's why I have Pici here in my house, because her name was--Itty Bitty means Morzsa. That's why I have here Morzsa, and I put my dog name and [cleared throat] when we, when I looked back I saw my little dog running after us and I saw people are going into our yard. I said, I asked my mother, "Mother why are they going in to our yard?" We have a big yard, a long yard with fruit trees and everything. "Why are they going in?" I said. She said to me, "Honey, don't look back. Don't look back." My mother know it, why they went in. They come, they went in already to steal, the minute we were, the second corner of the house, it was a long street you know, and my mother know it, they went in to steal but she don't, she don't want to tell me. The last minute I never forget. She said to me, "Put this under..." we have those closets, those furniture, the one furnitures where we keep our closet, our bedding nicely, we iron it and everything was my mother put it, everything nicely to make it surely straight, and she said to me, "Sylvia fix this up because that doesn't look good." When we look back already they were going, running in and my mother know why they running in, and they took us to the, to my aunt's place from my house, they took us to my aunt's place, they picked up my aunt and my little cousin, then we went to the next town, there was one Jewish family. There was one Jewish family, they picked up that family and then we go to the third village where they picked up the [unclear] 10 or 12 carriage was already, where they picked up all the Jews and the people, you know? We have a carriage, we have, we were in one carriage, my aunt was in the other carriage, you know? And, in the meantime, while we were going on the carriage the mail lady came, and she was running after us, "Mrs. Klein, I have a letter from your son," and she give it, gived the letter from my mother because she know that my mother was always waiting for the letter. She was a nice lady, a nice lady, and she was the mail

lady, she was carrying the mail and she said, "Mrs. Klein, here is a letter from your son," because she knows it my mother was always waiting the letter from her son. That was the last letter what my mother got from my brother. My mother and my father was with us so thank God my father was there because I figured no, no, nobody can hurt me because my father is there. Then they took us to that place, to that third village. I never knowed the neighbors, only one of them, who [unclear] one of the young lady who was later on my sister-in-law, who become my sister-in-law later on, when we both come from back, from the concentration camp. We were at together, they took us first to the ghetto. Where would they put us in the ghetto? I heard the ghetto, they were talking but I don't, I couldn't figure what is ghetto, you know? There, only on the road we heard that they going to take us to the ghetto. What is ghetto? Ghetto was that where was fenced in one of the neighborhood. The most Jewish, that was the most Jewish neighborhood in Satoraljaughely that we had, that was a city. And they bring us in to one of the Jewish house and there was the kitchen not bigger than this kitchen like we are here, my Aunt Berszka, Carmill [phonetic], Olga, and her little girl, eight and the three of us was laying on the, there that's going to be our room, kitchen. That's where we were sleeping, on the, there was no linoleum there, there was wood floor. At least wasn't so cold like linoleum. At that time it was after Easter in Hungary, no more cold. It's not hot, but it's not so cold. Well where you going to go to the toilet? Toilet was on the, it was a big, big house and it was one toilet in the middle of the yard, in the middle of the yard was one toilet. That's where we all, the whole house, that was the whole house there, from the Jewish people. I never forget when somebody wanted to come in the kitchen at night from the rest of the rooms or for the, for you know this people, this had two rooms, two bedrooms, a corridor, even the corridor were people laying, because they pushed in as much Jews as much they can in one house and my mother said, "Stand up," middle of the night. What you mean, "Stand up?" Because they want to make warm something for the kids, so I have to stand up otherwise they would step on you, there was no room. There was no room there, so we have to stand up till they make it warm then we go back to, not a bed, on the floor. We were there for--my aunt wasn't there, my aunt and, no, no, not this aunt, my, this aunt was there. This three aunt was there, but later on they took my three aunt and my cousin and she find a better place in other Jewish house where the kids you know, they were trying, the Jewish people, they were trying to give more room for the kid, it was 8 year old, the kid was 8 year old. And my other aunt was, who daughter is here in Great Neck, Long Island. They were in the synagogue, on the floor, staying in the synagogue on the floor, that's where they were, living.

GS: How long were you in this little house?

SE: In this, in this house we were there for about four week, about four week we lived there like that, and what we eat, I don't know. Don't ask me what I eat because I can't remember back. How I eat, what I eat, I just can't think, washed out completely.

GS: Did people just stay in the house they were assigned to all day?

SE: No, we can go to the yard, to the yard because that was a big house there and we were in the yard, and we can go on the ghetto, we visit our aunt, me and my cousin, we visit our friend, our aunt where she lived. Also in the ghetto, that was a ghetto, it was the same street, you know? The same neighborhood, you cannot get out from the ghetto, it was impossible to get out from the ghetto.

GS: Were there any activities organized for the children or...?

SE: Nothing, nothing, nothing--nothing, nothing, absolutely one dress I have and one dress I took because you cannot carry so much. You cannot carry so much you know? And then about four weeks later, they picked us up from there. They make it smaller, the ghetto, they bring all the Jews in the synagogue, there was a big synagogue there and they bring all the Jews in the synagogue, closer and closer, closer to the synagogue, whoever was no room in the synagogue are laying on the ground, on the synagogue ground. And one afternoon, but how, what I eat there, I can't remember, would you believe it? I can't remember if that, only once I remember we ate, my mother made some *cholent* in the baker, we have to bring it to the bakery, and I went with her and a neighbor who there was a baker, and we picked them up and it was so delicious that *cholent* like I never in my life eat, every Saturday we have *cholent*, but this was you know, wasn't interesting.

GS: And the Germans did not provide any food?

SE: No prov--no food provided, nothing, nothing. I have long hair, with braided, that time was the style, braided hair for, for teenager and I have, I was blonde all over, blonde, blonde, blonde, very blonde. My father said in the ghetto, we have to cut it down, cut down your hair because I don't want the *buza*, *buza* [lice], they call it that tic, tic to go into your hair. There was, you cannot wash it, there was no place to wash it. For four weeks, we didn't wash ourself. There was no bathroom, there was no bath, where you can wash yourself, for four weeks, so my father cut it off. I have long hair to my waist, cut it off, that was my first shock because I was a teenager and I was so proud of my hair, and I take such a good care at home, my mother used to, even so I was a teenager, my mother used to wash my hair all the time, and she cut it down, cut it down, and she, they were afraid it's gonna, we gonna have the tic. Finally, they took us to that, to that synagogue. There was Jewish people with children, young and old, and crying at night, walking on top of each other because we were so piled up there. One day I have Aunt there. We met there in the ghetto. They live far away from us. I never know them before, because in Europe, I was 12 year old when I first sit on the train. I, we not like here, you have money and everything. We have no money for train ticket and this was my relatives, they bring them in, they lived in Hernad, wait a minute, Litka, Litka--Litka, they live in Litka, they bring them in from that town and I never know them before. That was my mother aunt, listen to this, there was four generations and Linka nèni [aunt], Rusja nenie, Elsa nèni and her daughter [Klara], four generation, four generation, they were bring in, bring in to the same ghetto from all the village around, around, around, from every facility, they bring into that

Satoraljaughely. They bring all the Jews there and they lived, packing us in to each other. And I met this cousin there, at the synagogue because by then they bring them into the synagogue, the beautiful little girl, Kláríka, beautiful. And Elsa nèni was a young woman, her husband was not there anymore and Linka nèni husband died and Elsa nèni husband died, but that little girl, we loved her so much and we were playing all the time with her. We were in that synagogue and all the sudden one afternoon, we were there for at least two weeks in the synagogue to piled up but I can't remember what I eat, even if you kill me, I am trying to think back, where my mother took the food or what I eat, I can't remember, like washed out completely. And one night we were sleeping next to each other naturally, we were already sleeping next to each other. Every family was trying to be close each other. My aunt, my mother and then the little girl, we were all on the floor, sleeping there and one day they took, I, we heard that they were asking for Ruza nèni, why? Instead my old aunt went, her daughter Elza, she said I am, we belong there, we belong to her, she went with the *gendarme*. She was a beautiful young woman, religious naturally, you know. And she went away with the *gendarme*, *gendarme* take her away, the little girl was screaming, "Mommy, Mommy, Mommy," the grandmother, the great-grandmother was there, we were there, we were all trying to play, to make her happy but she was crying for Mommy, Mommy. Around the middle of the night, she come in, black and blue, she was black and blue, I am telling you. She don't have a place on her arm, on her face, on her body, the *gendarme* they said they find out, from America somebody send them a package. I know who was, who send it because after I talk to them here. She send a package. How the hell they get it, I don't know, because at that time America were not connected with Hungary, that was already everything German. All they were find out this people use to send them from the post office, there is somebody from the *gendarme* and that's why they bring. You have relatives in America, and my aunt, my Aunt Elza, we call her Aunt because everybody was all Aunt we called it, and she said every time they were hollering, "This is for your aunt in America. This is for that Jew in America." and they hit him, they almost black and blue till he come home, she was black and blue, she was screaming, crying, she can't sit because it was right--and I see that my mother crying too, but again I still say, "How is that possible because we're Jews, that's why," but America, I always heard from America because my mother lived ten year in New York when she was a young girl. She lived in New York ten years, she and her sister. They have, we have relatives who still, one of them live here in Ardmore, one of the, one of the cousins, second cousin live in Ardmore, and this relatives was already in America, and this relatives was helping the other relatives, that's why they get--she was almost, almost killed because years ago she was sending them some package and they find out American Jews have the Hungarian Jews, ok? And this aunt she was a young girl, she was a young woman, the baby was only four year old. She was a young woman, she looked like an old woman, broken, broken, busted all the way down. It was a horrible, horrible time, it was a horrible time, and about two weeks we were in that, in that synagogue, all the Jews and all of the sudden one

afternoon said, "Everybody out," in Hungarian language because the *gendarme*, all the police was Hungarian. There was, we didn't see no SS at that time, just in my town, but in the ghetto I didn't see no SS there, only Hungarian SS Police, they took it over. They were the SS, they were the, they kill us and do anything and everything. In the synagogue I saw one, they took a child, she was a baby, she was, the mother was breastfeeding and the *gendarme* took her and throw her to the wall and the child went to pieces, and the mother was screaming, she was, you know she was alive, how should I say, she fainted, she fainted. Nobody can say nothing in the ghetto, one day they came in and all the young girls got out and mother get out, all the women should go out to the, to the, to the yard and they come, not nurses who use to be the midwife, they check them if they put in diamond over there, you know? They were girls, my two young, two aunts was the young girls you know? And they came in don't ask what they did. Don't ask. And that's what I was a child but I hear what we were inside, and all the Jewish young people have to go and those people went and they looked at it, and if they hide, if they hide some diamond or some--how you call it?

GS: Jewels.

SE: Jewels, jewelry and they were crying, my two poor young aunt, she was crying. My mother was crying, and she said, "We are finished," and I can't understand why is she saying we are finished, you know, I was too young to really pick it up, it's really we are in such a bad shape and they, two weeks later from the synagogue they make us like standing in line five by five, front of us was that four generation, second, second was from the first, I mean first them and then my cousin who was here, who is still here in Great Neck, Long Island, her sister, her two brother, young brother and mother, it was five, five, there were five in a line. We have to stand five in a line. Men separate, right away, children and women, here. So we were the children and women, my father, my brother wasn't home. My father was already in the other line, other group. And my cousin father and the young brother 18 year old was with him, never come back. The father come back, but the young brother never come back. My father was running over from the line and I have a kerchief but in a fancy way to made it because I felt I'm a teenager already and I put it this way and he took it off, and he said to me, "Put it in your pocket. You should go with mother, you should look like a child." If he would only knew where I would go, if I would go with my mother, if he would only know. My mother was killed right away but when they were separating us, we were standing a line first this five, four generation then my close cousin and aunt then we. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, no, no, no, no, no, no, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. My cousin was here and this four generation was with us but because the baby was in her hands, so that's why mother and I was the fifth. So my aunt, my aunt, my close aunt and this cousin of mother, and the four generation because she was carrying the baby she don't count for fifth, so my mother and I was the fifth, three going up one with the baby and I still remember, I still feel in my arm was debate, Mengele was debate, where shall he put me because I was a tall girl, I was very, very skinny, but I was a tall girl and he was



debating: he should throw me to work or throw me right away to the conc--to the, to the gas chamber. I didn't know it, where, why? I just notice myself I was almost falling on my two cousins foot, back of my two cousins and right away. I was already, you know, there were two of them and me was three and then two other girl who we know, we made the five [unclear], you know?

GS: When you said, you can feel it in your arm--he had his hand on you?

SE: He had, he has his hand on my arm and he was the debating, should I throw her to work or should I put her right away to the camp, and I still feel I was, I was, you know, making like this...

GS: Swaying.

SE: Swaying because I don't know what he gonna and he make a big swing and he throw me to work. Throw me to the work, to the side where the young girls went to work, young people went to work, women.

GS Now could we stop for a minute...

SE: Yes.

GS: ...and tell me...

SE: Yeah.

GS: ...how did you get from the ghetto to Auschwitz?

SE: Okay, but I forget this part, I forget, I like to forget. When we were in that synagogue they said, "Everybody out on the yard, stand in line, five and five, stand in line, take your packages with you, take your packages with you," like it was important, you know? "Take all the packages, what you have, with you." We were walking and all of a sudden we stand in line--a long line, maybe 1,000 people--and they said, "March!" in Hungarian and you should have seen, you should have hear, Gloria, everybody all of the sudden "*Shema Yisroel*."<sup>1</sup> Where we are going, we're are we marching? "March!" We go this way, you know? And we were walking and walking and walking. Finally, we were at the station, it was far away from the station with the packages, everything, my poor mother, she wasn't healthy, she has her inside was out. When I was born, I came too fast, and she had a hard time, you know, even so she had an operation but still wasn't well, and carrying that big heavy [unclear]. We went, then we went to the station and everybody they were pushing, throwing, hitting the backside, the people who was at the end were hitting in to the, in to the, into the cattle, cattle car. They throw us in 86 people in one cattle car, 86 people. We hardly have room to sit. I'm not talking about laying down, hardly have room, the packages and all 86 people, little, old, young, everybody, man, woman, everybody in that, I mean as much as go in, 86 people. Naturally you have to make, in an hour you have to make, especially you kid, you are a kid, where are you going to make, what would you do? There was one *kübel* [pail] in the middle, and right away if somebody have to go, excuse me, we womens have to take off, men cannot make either because

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<sup>1</sup>Deuteronomy 6:4. First words of most important Hebrew prayer affirming the unity of God. Recited twice daily and before death.

everywhere was people so they have to make, you have to make... [tape one, side two ended]

*Tape two, side one:*

GS: This is tape number two of an interview with Sylvia Ebner, side one. Sylvia was, you were describing the experience on the train going to Auschwitz.

SE: Yeah, so the minute we went into the train and you have to make front of everybody, you lose your feeling, human being feeling. You don't feel no more human being. There's no more shame, you don't feel shame because you have to go, you have to go, you can't help it. But we become so thirsty, it was so warm, it was so warm on the train. There was a little hole, little window like the animal train, you know the cattle train, it was wired, wired little window, and hardly any air came in, it was so many people there. People was, kids was screaming, crying, grown-up crying, what's going to be with us? What's happening? Nobody wanted to drink, eat, but everybody wanted to drink because it was so hot, and all of the sudden they pushed the all car in to a tunnel. I never saw that tunnel there but it was a tunnel when the, before the train went out from that city have to go out. It was a big tunnel, and we couldn't get, we was standing there for hours in that tunnel, the train was standing there for hours and we couldn't get no air, in the tunnel was no air, we thought they gonna kill us right there in the tunnel, you know? We thought they--that's why they pushed us, they pushed us in. I remember when we went out from the tunnel, we saw the light, the street, I mean the trees, we were so happy they didn't kill us right away. We were sure that's why they put us there, to choke. The train went from Wednesday afternoon till Saturday morning. There was only once they give us water, one pit--or bit--one *kübel* of water. You should of see how everybody was, we cannot run because people was full sitting, laying, not laying, sitting, but kids was thirsty, crying, "I'm thirsty." I was crying myself, "Mommy I'm so thirsty," and my mother said, "Honey, I can't help it, I cannot give you water." Now I am a mother, I can't imagine how she felt when she cannot give her child a glass of water, a little bit of water. I was constantly, "Mommy I'm so thirsty." "Honey, I can't help it, I can't help it, I have no water." How you gonna sleep? How you gonna sleep when you have no room to sleep. I laid down on my mother and my father, and here I was sitting and I laid across on them, and my mother and my father was sitting all night, that's the way I was sleeping, because they want me to sleep. Come Friday night, it was, that was the worst thing I ever remember back, everybody wanted to light candle, everybody bring candle, we bring candle from home yet, but you're not suppose to light candle because the German gonna see it. We were already out from Hungary, we were Czech--went through Czechoslovakia and go to Poland, but we must light candle because we don't believe, it was no such a thing not to light candle. But how they light the candle, they light it for a minute, say the *brucha* [blessing] and right away blowing sound blow it away, you know? Because they don't want, they don't want, if somebody was standing front of the window, you know? Standing front of the window the German couldn't see in, we were lighting the candle, and I never forget my, my poor mother, my poor father, when my mother light the candle, he hugged me and he said to me

[crying] just re--[crying] the face I have, this time I saw my father crying and he said to-- just remember, [unclear] [term of endearment], my child, we love you very much, and if we don't come home take care of your brother. "Where is my brother?" My brother wasn't--and I said to myself, "What he mean, we don't come home?" You know? When you're a child, you can't picture that the father don't, well, "Where would you be? Where would you be?" I was sure he gonna be with me all the time, you know? And I said to myself, "Where would my father would be? Why is he telling to me that?" Then he said to me, "I'm sure they're going to separate us." Again, I couldn't picture it, to be separated again from my father because I felt so sure when someone when my father was with me and then he said, "Remember if you gonna see on the sky." That was the first time I've heard that they advertising in the sky, but my father was a very learned man, he was finished, he was finished Business College and he always showed us his report card, it was in a drawer in the bedroom and when we don't want to learn, "I want you to bring home the same card like I bring home," always was warning us, you know? And he had, he was all A's, all A's and he was a very learned man, as a matter of fact he read too much. Many times my mother was working hard with the animals, I feel guilty for that. My mother was feeding the animals around to the store and my father was reading, reading, reading.

GS: You were saying that your father said, "Look at the sky...?"

SE: Yeah he said, "Look at the sky," and I said, he said there is sometimes advertising on the sky and that was the first time I heard that word--on the sky advertising. When I came to America and I was in Atlantic City and I saw the advertisement on the sky, then I understand what my father was meaning about advertising. And he said, "I'm gonna advertise it where I am or where is your brother, always look the sky when you see an airplane going, look up on the sky," and I never heard advertising that time, we never--but he read it. He read it from books, you know? That's the way people advertising in the sky and when the first time I went to Atlantic City and I saw in the sky the advertising the lotion and this and that, then I know what my father was meaning about advertising.

GS: Do you mean like the airplanes...

SE: Airplanes.

GS: ...carry a message...

SE: Carry. Airplane carry a message...

GS: ...on a banner?

SE: Yes, on a banner but who knows I never...

GS: Right.

SE: ...heard that before and how would I know it? Only years after I was married and I went to Atlantic City and I saw that banner was saying something, then I know what my father was meaning, and he said right, "When we come home, anybody come home..." and again I said, "Why don't we all come home?" It just couldn't go into my head, "Why we all not come home? What they going to do with us?" I wasn't thinking they gonna kill us, I never, and my father never mentioned they gonna kill us. He figured,

he gonna go separate and we gonna come home early--differently, you know, different times. We should go home to our town, that's the first station, where we should go and everybody should meet in our town, and from there we do what we do, you know?

GS: I'd like you to finish the, your recollection of the trip, it was Friday night, you...

SE: Yeah.

GS: ...lit the candles, okay?

SE: And my, it was Friday night and my father said, "Please don't forget we love you very much and we love your brother, and remember one thing, take care of each other. That's your duty to take care of your brother and your brother's duty to take care of you." I never, my brother never come back, my father never come back, my mother never come back, I was alone to come back. I was 13 ½ and finally I arrived to Hungary. I was there a year in the concen--first I was in Auschwitz.

GS: Okay, the train then pulled in to Auschwitz on Saturday morning?

SE: The train pulled in in Auschwitz Saturday morning, "Everybody out, all the packages leave in the, in the train." That's why it was so important to bring, you know?

GS: Right. And was this in June?

SE: That was, I know it's eight days before *Shveés*.<sup>2</sup>

GS: Okay.

SE: What month was it, what month was it, I don't know. I have my *Yahrzeit*.

GS: So eight days before *Shavuot*?

SE: Eight days before *Shavuot* is my *Yahrzeit* for my mother.

GS: Okay. And...

SE: So what month it was, I don't know.

GS: Okay.

SE: Something, don't ask.

GS: And you left, you left your packages in the train?

SE: All the packages, just "Everybody down, everybody down from the train," first and pulling and the one who was front of me were, he had a big, with the, there was a string you know, how you call it?

GS: A rope?

SE: A rope, rope with a string [she probably means a whip] and it was killing the people like...

GS: Was this an SS man?

SE: SS, SS, SS was standing there and fast, "*Schnell, schnell, schnell*," and they were hitting us with that, with that rope, with that, how you call that, regular, not regular rope, it was made from, made from leather, leather, and we were running, we don't know where we running, we just run, run, run out from the train, out from the train, very fast.

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<sup>2</sup>Jewish holiday of *Shavuot* in 1944 it was May 28 and 29. The first deportation from Hungary occurred on May 5, 1944.

But I was so thirsty, Gloria. I was so thirsty, nothing I was interested, just running to the - pile. "Where I am," I said to myself down from the train, tired up, bent--how you call that--packages, valises, and people I thought it's water in it, you know, like those, those, how you call that, jars, jars, braided jars, a lot of braided jars, I thought it was full with water. I was running to every jar. My mother said, "Honey there is no water there. Don't run, don't run." "But I am so thirsty, Mommy, I am so thirsty." Finally, start, "*Alles heraus, Alles heraus!*" [unclear] I mean [unclear] five, five, five and saw the men was going to the other side, you know? Men separate, women separate, and we were finally standing children and women at the line, mens was on the other side. Then my father come to me and take off my hat. You should look like your moth, like a child, then you go with mother. If I would go with my mother I would be killed right away. They said right away, elderly people wanted to go with the cars or with the big, how you call those wagons, you know wagons, up, up, up, they pushed them up, you know, elderly people they don't want to walk. They figure they have to walk who knows how far. My two aunts, my three aunts, children, babies up on the car, on the wagon, or you're walking, right away, the minute that the big cars are starting to go, they have the vacuum turned back and they were killed right on the, on the cars. Not the, there were no cars, how you call those big red rigs, how you call those big rigs? Those...

GS: Like a truck?

SE: Truck, truck, truck, "Everybody on the truck. Who cannot walk, who don't want to walk, up to the truck." And a lot of the people and a lot of the children and this and cousin, you know? She took, she went up with the, they took him, put him up right because she don't want to leave the mother, "Go with the truck, go with the truck," they went right to the truck and they pushed me away and throw me right to the, right on, I was back of my cousins. They took us, who is one in Israel now and one is here in Great Neck, Long Island and I was happy at least I have them. "Where is Mother?" Till I look around, I see them already, everybody was up on the truck, everybody was, they don't want to leave each other, they all went to the truck. That's all I see, that's the last time I saw my mother, and women on the road, we were marching to the, to the bathroom, they, not the bathroom, to wash ourselves.

GS: To shower.

SE: To shower, they took--they bring us to the shower. Everybody standing five, and five line you know, and pushed us into the shower. Right away my hair was completely down, hair from there, hair from everywhere, wherever you have hair. And you have to--you go to the washroom and when you come out, they spritz you down something, I don't know what was it; they give me a gray dress, shorts--short sleeve, one gray dress. But on the road, I said to myself, "Maybe it's not so bad here because the crazy people, they look clean, ok they shaved but maybe they shave they don't want the tick to get in but they look like they're taking them for a walk." I figured those are crazy people and even then they take care of them. In a half an hour later, I was one of the crazy ones,

I had a gray dress, I have the shaved thing and I was marching to the, to the camp, to Au-- to Birkenau, we were marching to Birkenau. We went through that, that door, you know, that big door. That time, I tell you the truth, I don't speak German a word and I don't know what that means, "*Arbeit Macht der Leben Süß*, [labor makes life sweet].<sup>3</sup> I don't know but many girls know, speak German, you know, and my father speak German, perfect German. I'm sure when he saw that, he know what that mean and, but I was with my cousins, at least I have my two cousins with me. They throw us into a barrack, it was already at night but in the meantime, I said my mother can't see without glasses and I have his glasses with me--her glasses--I have her glasses with me because my mother read, need it for read, need it for sew and I have it, I don't know how I have it with me, I don't know why it was in my hand, I don't know, I have no idea, and I said, Oh my God and mean--everything, you have to leave here everything, everything except your shoes, except your shoes, everything leave in the washroom. I said, "Oh my God, my mother glasses, what, I must take them, my mother can't see without it." I didn't know that truck gonna take my mother to kill, I didn't know at that time, I didn't know that time. How will I, how I gonna hide it, you have nothing on you just your shoes on you, in you. You have to put on your shoes. I put it under the arm and they, and the SS find it, he give me such a bang on my back, "Your mother don't need that no more." I said, "That's my mother's." He throw it to the floor. I never forget it. He throwed the glasses on the floor, and give me a big push, a big bang on my back. Go, *geh* go, go, go, *schnell, schnell* and I saw where she throw them. I said, "Oh my, my God, how my mother gonna, she cannot even a needle to put in without that..."

GS: At this time had you seen Mengele?

SE: I see Mengele when they separate from my mother. That's the time I saw my mother before they separate me, Mengele hold my arm and debating, "What shall I do?" But I don't know why, she was, he was debating with me. I don't know it. I was only interested of the water because I was so thirsty I was interested of the water, and I felt he give me a big, you know, a big slap and I find myself next to my cousins, and my mother I saw we was, she was already in the thing. After that I see plenty Mengele, after that I see her plenty. I was, I went, then I was in that *A Lager*, that was a horrible place, that was a horrible place. We were standing from four o'clock in the morning, it was so cold, we freezing. One dress on you, no underdress, undershirt, nothing, nothing, just your shoes and your gray dress short sleeves. We were freezing, we stand five people in the line, and luckily, we were four friends until the [unclear], we didn't see the Germany coming from the other side then we stand three but we change each other, you know, because the front who was at the front and in the back you freeze. So we were, we tried to change each other to be in the middle and try to hug each other till they don't come. The, of the four, they, they, you know, they were hollering, "You are afraid from them." [unclear] It was a Jewish girl, you know? "Look at your mother," I want quiet. Jewish girl said it. "I want..."

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<sup>3</sup>*Arbeit Macht Frei* - work makes you free, was on top of gate at Auschwitz.

GS: This is the Jewish girl...

SE: This is the Jewish girl...

GS: ...who was in charge of?

SE: She was in charge for the whole block. At night when we couldn't, you couldn't sleep because you cannot sleep flat, they give you a little *Koje* [space] we call it *Koje*, six people, six people, there was no cover, there was no nothing, just a gray dress on you, and you sleep on the side, because you have no place to sleep one way or that way or this way, one turn, everybody have to turn because there was no room. One wake up, everybody--and in the beginning we were quite noisy then that girl, Aliseka, said, "What do you think? Why are you so happy? Why are you talking? Look at your mother, smell out, there is your mother goes up." And we said, "See, she is just a facist." We didn't believe it at the beginning, we don't believe it. We believe it the next day when we really smell the, the smell outside on the front of the, you never been in Auschwitz?

GS: No.

SE: Anyhow they were out there everyday, we were freezing around four o'clock then come nine, ten o'clock we were bubble up, burning, the sun was burning us and bubble up, completely bubble up, there was no medicine to put it down, there was no medicine, it went down itself. It was raining like crazy and the clothing get wet, you cannot change it, you go in after the [unclear] *cale-appell* [morning body count], you go inside or they catch you to work, or they catch you to work, what was the work, and I was such a *schlemiel* all the time. I can't believe it, I was so *schlemiel*. In the meantime but that was later on, I tell you, ok--for this time, this, I was with my cousins and my cousin, the one who's in Great Neck--she's sick now too--she was very weak, she was a pretty girl but there was a night when come two SS and a Jewish girl with her, with him, and the Jewish girl was pulling the people out and this girl was very nice because she saw my cousin was very weak and she pulled her out and we said, "We gonna go always together, we won't gonna be, they won't let us separate," so the minute they pulled her, we were sure we go to the crematorium because we know already the crematorium, we smell crematorium, we know already sick, sick you are dead, we know everything. We were hungry, so hungry there was no water, no, I'm telling you we were, it was horrible. They give us some kind of a soup and no matter how hungry we were, we cannot eat it, it was some grass and some sand in it, we couldn't eat it. It was impossible. They give us a piece of bread like that, that's the only thing what we could eat, so anyhow, this time we said we going to be together all the time and they took my cousin, her sister said, "She's my *Schwester*. She's my sister," and I said, I don't even wait, I said, "She's my cousin." And my girl we have--do you know Jungreis, do you ever read Jungreis' story, Rebbetzin Jungreis, do you ever hear from it?<sup>4</sup>

GS: Umm unne, [signified no].

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<sup>4</sup>Jungreis, Esther; The Jewish Soul on Fire; Morrow, 1982, NY.



SE: Oh, one day I have money, I buy you that paper. I have to have that paper, Rebbetzin Jungreis, in every way she saved us.

GS: How do you spell that?

SE: Jungreis. How you spell, what the heck, I don't know, Rebbetzin Jungreis.

GS: Okay, I'll get it later.

SE: I gonna give you one paper, what I have...

GS: Okay.

SE: Okay? I gonna give you one paper. On Saturday, I bring you one paper. That was a big rabbi's family and her father was a big rabbi in Tokaj, in that town and my cousin was very good friend and I was very good friend, childhood friend with this girl. She was our fort, she was our fort, so I said, we run after, she was my cousin and this girl, Piri, her name was Piri, she's my sist--I was her sister. So we don't, we don't care where we go, but we gonna go together. We go to the crematorium because my sister, my cousin was very sick, very weak, we were sure we go there. In the meantime they bring us into B Lager, not to the crematorium. We were so surprised, you know? "What, what happening?" We didn't, they didn't take us to the crematorium. We went into that barrack and they said, "We are going to work on Brzézinka," we call it Brzézinka, that you call it Canada. They call it Canada what we call it Brzézinka, you know? Tomorrow morning we gonna go to work there. We couldn't believe it and we don't know what is Brzézinka, but we arrived there it was about, they took us about, they took maybe 30 girls all together from this, and we arrived there to the Brzézinka, we have to march, walk, and we arrived there, there was food, the food what we Jews, what my, I never even know my mother have anything but people was taking with them in the package, so they take the food and there was medicine, and we can change our shoes. My shoes, already, was finished. I have a half pair, not half, it was a yel,--brown shoes, there was there, the sole was already almost finished you know, so I, we could change it, we not suppose to change it but the girls said, "You go ahead and change it," and we have, they give us a white cloth in our hat, white cloth, they took us in the shower room, they give us a white hat from a piece of sheet, they cut it off, everybody have white hat and they give blue and white to *tüip* [tüille fabric]. You know what is *tüip*? Blue and white uniform, blue shiny it was, all the Jewish people have it, womens, have it at that time, everybody, that was the style in Hungary and Europe, blue and red, shiny material and with little dots, red, no white dots. That was the style at that time in Europe, every young woman before they get married, they get this, that was go with it. Red, not red, wine colored and white *tüip* or blue colored with white *tüip*. So they divide us, wait a minute, I'm sorry, sorry, sorry that was later on, that was later on, sorry, no, no, no. No, no, no, they give us, I'm sorry forget that one, that was later on, that was later on. No, we went in and we were allowed to buy--get the white hat but the regular dress, okay? And they didn't go and check you, or if they check you, God forbid, right away they put on underwear because we were separating those packages that was near the station and they bring in with big, big wagon all the stuff what we Jewish people were carrying, all the

big packages, valises, everything was there, and clothing what we bring in, our clothing there, we took us, we cannot change the top because we have a number on it, on the gray unless we have a red mark you know? And they give us number and *Haftling*, we were *Haftlings* [prisoners] so we cannot change the top but we put up underwear and we change right away our shoes and the hat, the kerchief instead of one, we double it, triple it, you know, and then we put it on our head. We gonna go back to the camp, you know? What do you think I was sitting on the toilet, they call it toilet *latrine*. *Latrine* mean rod like this here, and you sit there on that thing when you have to go to the toilet and you sit, that's where you see right away, who is who, that was the first thing. "Who are you?" And I ask, "Where you come from?" Hungarian, you know? She said, "I am from Fershiga [phonetic] and right away I recognize my cousin, my cousin voice. She said Fershiga, I look at that, we don't recognize each other because we were all run down already but the voice I recognize, we recognize it--Sylvia, Margo, you know? [Hungarian phrase] "How they--how you come here, how you come?" She said she's under the next *Lager*, next block, about four or five block away and I was already in Brzézinka, "Oh my God," right away I took off my hat, you know, and I tell her, I just have single then, you know? And the first thing was to change her shoes. She had no shoes and I have already good shoes. Right then in the toilet I changed her shoes right, but she has small foot, that her shoes was still from home and I have always a big foot, but I don't care, I have to take it, I have to change it, okay, but what, how I gonna give her food, the minute we were in that Brzézinka, you know, we were allowed, we get half a bread, half a bread, brown bread. We cut it in pieces, we cut it in slices, because there was knife and we put a marmalade, you know, in, *schmaltz*, what anything was good we put it in, you know, anything food we put it in, we thought we didn't know we gonna meet anybody, but whoever was with me in the barrack, they all was there, they all was working there, but for our cell. But when I met her, right away you know, I went, I run into my barrack, "Wait here," and I give her and my cousin have the food there too, right away, we give her food and we give her so much she can bring to her sisters. Every night we come home, we were coming into the *Lager* maybe four weeks from that *Lager*, from Brzézinka, we come into the same *Lager* to sleep. You know, where we were, they put us first, and every night we were packing in food but this time we get smarter because people get already their stomachache, running stomach you know? So what we do, we have, there was *Tablett*, there was some kind of a tablet what stopped the running stomach, and we find there so many medicine between the packages, not everybody was so poor like we were, you know? From all the... [tape two, side one ended]

*Tape two, side two:*

GS: ...two, side two, an interview with Sylvia Ebner.

SE: You know and there in that Brzézinka, everything we have to bring in, all the big packages. It was a long barrack, was maybe ten barracks. One was separated, we, we, they bring into us, so we have to put separate, underwear, men underwear, women underwear, *tallis*, *tefillin*, and all the shoulder pads, we have to check the shoulder pads, they know it, they know the Jews gonna hide the gold and whatever they have. Even so, before we have to go to the Townhouse and bring in all the jewelry, they said, they were--bum, bum, bum, bum, bum."Every Jew should bring all their jewelry and everything to the, to the city hous--Townhouse," whom the hell they were saying that, we were altogether four Jews, we were all around the town, but every *goy* have to hear that, "All the Jews have to bring in their jewelry," and everything. But my father outsmart them, I tell you later on, let me finish that. Okay, this place was all the clothing, everything, and we have to separate--ladies, separate men's, separate children, separate the soap, separate the medicine, the, the, the meat, the *schmaltz*--how you call the *schmaltz*--the oil things, separate. We have an elderly woman from my town also working at the same place with two of her daughter, and she find her own package, what she bring in. She find her own package, and those people wasn't poor, and they have a lot of jewelry. She find it and she said, "Kids, we find good jewelry, we don't gonna throw..." there was a valise, you have to throw it in monies, jewelries, we have to check all the bottom of the sweaters, where anything that was turned back because they know the Jews was hiding the jewelry, you know? And we have to pull it out and throw it in that valise. I never in my life saw so much jewelry, money, dollar, first time I saw dollar in my life, everything but this woman said to us, Mrs. Adler, I think her name was Adler. She said, "If we find something kids, just to put it into the ground," the barrack where we work, it was covered both sides but the ground was ground, you know? It wasn't wood or cement. It was ground. And everybody take a piece of carpet and there we were working on the carpet, Jews bring the carpet, Persian carpet and everybody was allowed to work on that, because they don't want the clothing to get dirty, so here they allow us to work on the carpet. "Lift up the carpet and push it into the ground, push it into the ground, deep into the ground," that lady said. We wouldn't think of it but this lady said, we won't think of it, you know? You should have seen later on the people, the Polish people they went and they were selling it by the bucket, the ground, they know it. They know there is jewelry in but they were smart, they take out the jewelry and they sell the ground for their friend. They take out the jewelry and the friend, they sell the ground for the, for the, because in that place everybody know we were, there was jewelry, and they no dummies. They figured they throw it in the, they *shtup* it in, you know? But they were smarter, they kept the jewelry and they sell their own friend the ground. Maybe they put some junk in it, one piece here and there, and everybody was buying the ground, because the Jews put the jewelry there. So here I was and all of

the sudden come around, every day, oh no four weeks we went into the same camp, after we sleep over already. We didn't go every day in to the camp till we working, till we went to the camp, my cousin was all right because we bring in the food, if they would find out, we stealing food, first thing would be cut off our hair, what we don't have no hair, but already grewed a little bit, it was four week. Like here you know when you cut it down completely, so slowly it start to work. That would be the first thing to cut our hair. Second thing, we would never be able to go to Brzézinka, that was comparing, that was something where you can find food, steal food. My cousin was very good stealer. She was older cousin. She was very smart, and always watching the German, the German didn't see if she was already there and pulled some food out and bring it in and give it to us. But anyhow, we bring in four week the food for my cousin, and later on we put in medicine in the bread. If they would find it, I'm sure we won't go no more there to work or they would hit us, kill us. It was really, we risk our life. So my cousin give me that shoes, I don't ask how I went into that place, and we have to march, you know, one, two, three, march. What happened, we were there for two weeks, and all of the sudden the other, and every day we changed shoes, every day. Somebody come and we give it to them because shoes was finished already, we were there already six weeks and the, the mud and everything, eat it up. All of the sudden I see a girl come in that was from the second village where I lived. I saw her only once and she said to me, "Sylvie, my sister's shoes is very bad. Can we change it?" So I change the shoes from her foot and she give her shoes for her sister, and she has again a small foot. "How I gonna go in?" and it was already rotten and everything, and they know we work there and they know we have to have shoes already on us. "How am I going to make it to look like a shoes?" you know? I took the, we get jam, we get jam, you know? Marmalade...

GS: Oh, okay.

SE: Marmalade, and I smeared it in the shoes to look like, you know, like a good shoes, doesn't, shouldn't look like a used out shoes because if they would find out, they know I am already working there and I have a good shoes. I remember when I marched by in that door, *Arbeit Mache der Leben Süß*, and there were SS watching on both sides, so fast I marching when I, and I was in already. My God, a big stone went down after somebody else, I was standing it was the place there to sleep. They give us the place there to sleep, and we were--this come the blue dress. Here we get the blue dress and the other barrack, there were--crema--near the crematorium, it was so near the crematorium, not as far like that tree, no, maybe three times like that kitchen, we were so close to the crematorium. And the one barrack was the red, blu--*tüpf*, the wine *tüpf* and the other barrack was the blue *tüpf* and I was in the blue, blue dot. Dressed up, everybody have to have blue dress and everybody in the other barrack have to have red dress, but there we weren't no more, we aren't going in no more to the, to the place. Every day while we were marching in for four days--four weeks they come the *Sonderkomando*, you know what is the *Sonderkomando*?. They were carrying a big junk of wood on their, on their shoulder, and

we know why for they carry, because we know already there was a crematory and we know this, this, this people by then they put them and they change them and you know that was the *Sonderkomando*, they call it. Anyhow, we were sleeping on the barrack and every morning we would march out to work, sorry. Every morning we march out to work, at night we come back and we sleep there, and food they give us junk, came *Yom Kippur* they give us the best of food. No, wait a minute that was *Tisha B'Av*, first was *Tisha B'Av*, yeah, when we fast, they give us the best of food, the best of food. But you think we ate? That girl said, "Don't eat girls, don't eat that," because this have bacon and milk and some *tzibele* [onion] cooked together, "So don't eat it because this is bacon and things," so definitely we didn't eat it. They couldn't believe it, and the Jewish girls was, who take care of the barrack, they threw it out, you know, they threw it out because they don't want the Germans to see we didn't eat it.

GS: Oh.

SE: You know? They threw it out because they don't want Germans to see we didn't eat it. Anyhow it was--we know some--we know already everything. All day we see there was not enough room in the crematorium, it was so fast, the [unclear] the people was coming in, they were big ditches and we saw when they throw in the people in the ditches. First, first, there was no tent front of us, there was only wire, but they, they later on, they don't want us to see, so they put the blanket, they covered all, they used all the blankets what we Jews was bringing to make a cover, like a shield us, shield us from the peop--, we should not see the crematorium. You know, that time we didn't see no more the crematorium because first of all we were not interested because we know, what is it, you know, and then they cover it down, cover it down with the things. Once we, before it was covered down, there was a man from Munkacs, he burn his own children, his own family, as he told us. "Can you imagine what I did today," he said, "I had to burn my own children." Munkacs, that was a city, that was Carpatos, that was the Carpathian people--yeah. We were working there, we were at that time we still have food because the transport, they still coming. All of the sudden I got sick. What you gonna do if you get sick there? Where you going to go? What you gonna, who want to take care of you? There was a little hum--house for, with four bed, four top and bottom. Little hospital, they call it and my cousin, my cousin know one of the forelady, who was a forelady there, who said to my cousin, "You know something, you look exactly like my sister," and she treat her, she was with the German, Jewish girl but she was, but she treat her like her sister, and when I get sick, she went, she met this girl, and she said my cousin is in the hospital, in that little hospital, please try to help her, you know, she said to that Jewish girl. So this Jewish girl went--there was a Jewish doctor in the same hospital--and this Jewish girl steal *Scharlach* serum [scarlet], you know what is *Scharlach* serum, that anybody who was in *Scharlach*, anybody who become--what is it? That time is already? Quarter past, what is it? Oh my God.

GS: It's 12:15.

SE: 12:15, okay. And anybody...

GS: Scarlet fever?

SE: Scarlet fever, I guess...

GS: Okay.

SE: I get scarlet fever. I was so sick, but I didn't know this was scarlet fever at that time. I know only one thing, I was sick, and my cousin who was friends with this, who like her sister, tell her, "My cousin is very sick. Try to do something," and she send in the Jewish doctor. The Jewish doctor was who taking care of us, and she find that the time I find it out, I don't even remember, not that time, after. I find out what was it, cause my cousin told me when we met. She find *Scharlach* [scarlet] serum, *Scharlach* serum that means if anybody is in *Scharlach* that blood changed and that blood is helping you, your husband know what it is.

GS: Okay.

SE: You have scarlet serum, just mark it down, she knows, he knows what...

GS: Scarlet serum?

SE: Scarlet serum, serum, yeah. And they give me that, and finally the fever went down on me. I was very high fever and they bring me into the big river, the big one.

GS: The big what?

SE: The big river, river, they call it river, that was other hospital...

GS: The river.

SE: The river, yeah, yeah.

GS: Okay, sorry.

SE: They bring me in from that place, and my sister, my cousin know her, she left my other cousin to come with me, and in the meantime they bring lunch, bring back to this place where we separated from the main barrack, the main camp, they bring in the lunch from there. So she offered herself, she gonna help to bring in the lunch. They come in with me, she come in with me, they bring me in horse and buggy, they put me down in the barrack. I tell you it was horrible, after that place where we were in the, I still have the blue dress with the dots and I have already pajama on me, you know, because I get there pajama on the place, but I went into that place and there was no, there was three bed like this and salt, and straw, straw but it was already mushed up and they told me up on there. I was sick and you know scarlet it goes to your bone, you cannot hold, you cannot hold a spoon, you cannot hold a spoon because you have no strength in your hand, you have in the bone, all goes to the bone, and I, and they throw me up there on that bed, and next it was a bed here like this, bed here, three bed, three up and three up this way and three up this way and we were, I was on the third tier, you know, three up and up, and just a little room between to go to each other and I see there a girl was crying. "Why you crying?" Right away I know this from her cry, she was Hungarian, "Why you crying?" "Why you crying?" I said, "I just got separated from my cousin and I know I never going to see them again." She was crying because she was just separated from her mother. She was with her

mother, she was in a, working in a weaving company, weaving, they were weaving, woving, they were woving...

GS: Weaving?

SE: Weaving.

GS: Oh weaving.

SE: Weaving, she was working with the weaving and I was working in the Brézinka. Right away we become like a sister, we were like sisters, she was Hungarian, we were like sisters right away. She has nothing on her, honest-to-goodness, so I right away take off my bottom of the pajama because my, the top was long enough, you know, and I have the blue dress on me. We were there for six week. She has scarlet fever, I have scarlet fever and there was people from typhus. People were dying from left to right, from left to right. This one, I did bring this one, I did bring out this one the next day we will have the neighbor, this one already, but we were together, you know, and we were--eat, you have to eat what they give you, I never forget she said to me. Said, "I can't eat." "You must eat, my *lager* sister, you must eat this." Finally we eat because we must eat she said to me, she was older than me and I listen to her, you know, I eat what they give me. But next, it wasn't even a week, there was no medicine, but there was fever, they took measure your fever and there was a fever chart front of your bed, fever chart front of your bed, but I was lucky I get the fever serum, you know, my fever went down already that time. My fever went down already, if I wouldn't get that serum, my fever, it would kill me, you know? And this friend of mine, she had no more fever, she was there already a week, she said, "My fever is over already. It went down." All of the sudden, well, we were constantly talking to each other you know, nothing to do there just talking from the family in Hungary and how you eat there, what you think how you eat? You hungry, you so, we were hungry already before too, in the camp, in Auschwitz already. We use to talk, Mother made this, mother made that, chicken *paprikash* and this and that, and it was so, so delicious. Somebody's idea was let's make *manna* out of it. You know how the Jews eat, *manna*, taste like chicken. Isn't it, isn't it delicious we were talking. And one of the girls said, "Oy I'm so hungry." "How can you be hungry? Mommy just made a big plate of, dish full of chicken, we just eat it." That's the way we eat it, to keep ourself in food, believe it or not. So anyhow we were there for six of the second week. All of the sudden, I see big commotion, big commotion, the girls who are taking care of the, of that big long room was in the middle was a high thing like this, that was the heating system for winter. In the meantime, I saw many times the *Stublings* are sitting on it, you know, that was the middle of the, that was on this side, that was on this side, and this was in the middle. I saw they were excited, and I heard that, you know? I heard that Mengele, Mengele, Mengele, Mengele, you know? "What was that? Was that?" Then they said, "They come to select us. They come to select us. Make yourself..." the girl said that, "You're not sick. Don't show you're sick," but we have an under, next, next bed under me, next bed under there was a little room here. There was a woman, a French woman, a Christian woman, but her

husband was Jewish and she give birth there, a little girl. The Jewish doctor helped her to give birth, but when I arrived the baby was already born, and the baby have no clothing, nothing, and I know how to sew and the mother give some piece of things, and I made the hat and I made, you know the little hat, and I made the little shirt for her, she was naked, the baby was naked. Just covered with the blanket and the baby was crying, there was so much bed bugs, you can't sleep at night. You put down your head, you put down your head, your bed bug, you can, you can, eat you up. We don't have no blood anyhow, eat us up, so what you do, we were sitting all night, and itching, but at least it didn't itch you here. During the day they were sleeping, the bugs they don't come out light, so during the day we were trying to sleep. This baby was screaming, she was hungry, the bugs was eating, she don't have enough milk, her breasts swollen up, she don't have no milk. She was a beautiful woman, a French, beautiful Christian, but her husband was Jewish, and that Jewish doctor, and they were hollering, "They come, Mengele's coming." She was afraid, you know, they cannot hide their babies. She heard--I saw when she give the injection to kill the baby. She give the injection for that beautiful baby and cover her down, baby goes, "up, up," and that's all we hear, that's all we hear, but when the doctor came already the baby was quiet, and the woman was crying, her breast was full with milk but she was infected. She was standing next to me on this side, that Jewish woman--not Jewish, she was Christian--and this side was my girlfriend and we were lucky in the meantime, I was in Ausc, in that good camp where I was, have a chance to eat, you know? Good camp, you call a good camp.

GS: Ummm hmmm.

SE: You call a good camp near the crematorium, work near the crematorium and see the people, who are throwing in, good camp, but for food wise, it was, it was, and this, she was working in a weavery, weaving material, and she wasn't so run down either, but we have to hold our heads, the girl said, "Don't make *nebbish*, hold yourself, hold yourself straight. Show you all right," and it was when they pulled, first was this woman, they take, she wasn't skinny either, I don't know where, maybe they just think of it. The first thing they say, "You have to hold your fever chart in your hand." "You have to hold your fever chart in your hand." What the hell they look the fever chart, they don't give, even give a hospital or anything, took her fever chart away, they pass by me, pass by my girlfriend, they took the next one to her, come at night they pull them down, pull them down from the bed, they pulled them down those people, she was--this one wasn't crying no more, she wanted to die because her child died. I saw where they take her, she was [unclear] she don't want to live no more, she was crying that's why. But this girl that they took was horrible, horrible, so we went [unclear]. In the meantime, I was, I have a head of cabbage. You know what is a head of cabbage? What that mean? Lifesaver, but I know how to sew, and there was Christian *Stublings* [phonetic], workers, whom they were there in the camp but they never kill them, and they were working in the hospital, and some Jewish doctors, and some Jewish girls, and they want to have to make a pillow case and I



was a sewer, and I said, "I can sew," and they give me the head of cabbage because I sewed the pillow cases. A head of cabbage there was like here, I don't know big pile of diamonds, but we gonna, they gonna, they gonna kill us, and the cabbage is there. They--so we were running under the blanket, we were eating and watching which side, you know, my girlfriend and me, eating and finish it up, you know? There we finished it up, we don't want to leave it here because they gonna kill us anyhow, and they don't kill us, we don't have no more cabbage either. [laughter] Eat them up quick we went back and in the meantime, they were coming, Mengele, the other side where the typhus, same room, but this side was the scarlet fever this side was the typhus fever and they become so big, big, from the, how you call it?

GS: Like boils?

SE: ...Boils, like boils, probably they were there longer, but I don't know what from they got the boils, infection. They put this on there in the middle of this piece of thing without blanket, without anything, they put the people down, tie down the two feet, and operated without anything, without any...

GS: Anesthetic.

SE: Anesthetic, nothing, screaming, and I saw, we saw them, they were cutting them so and then they put it, by then they all died, they I tell you...

GS: And this Mengele was there...?

SE: Mengele did that, Mengele was experienced, experienced to take the boil out, you know, with the...

GS: Experimented.

SE: Experimenting for them. I tell you, it was just horrible. There was underneath a beautiful, there was a Czechoslovakian girl. I don't know if she was in scarlet or what she was. She died right underneath of me, underneath of me, that beautiful dark hair, that she, she wasn't too skinny, she wasn't too long in the camp. Then on this side, there was a French girl she draw, she was such a draw, where she took the paper, I don't know, and pieces of chalk, she was drawing faces and everything, they took her, they kill her too. Finally six weeks later, I was supposed to go back to my cousin because they said they bring me back to my cousin...

GS: Ummm hmmm.

SE: ...and my *lager* sister went a week before me because she was there a week before me, so I give her my top of my pajama because I gonna go back, I gonna go back to the camp and I gonna have it, you know? I have underwear, I give her my underwear because I gonna have another one, you know? I just have my shoes on me and I was sure I, they gonna take me back, and she was sure she going to go back to her mother but she still have, she cannot have nothing there. Finally she went home, she went back. I don't know where she was. Then my turn was, they washed me before everybody, they wash me, they send me to the shower before anybody, and I was supposed to wait when they brought the lunch, in the truck, they bring the lunch and I was supposed to go on that lunch, lunch

car back with the lunch together. But in the meantime, my cousin, who now is in Great Neck, Long Island, she came, she offered herself, she gonna come for the lunch, she bring in medicine, she bring in bread to the hospital to me. Full of medicine and for that bread, for that medicine, for that Christian those *Stublings*, they know it the minute somebody come from Brzézinka, "Did she bring you anything? Did she bring you anything? I give you this. I give you that." So I get a piece of bread for it, you know? I couldn't give it to nobody because I don't know what kind of medicine it was. I couldn't give it to anybody but those good for nothing, they know it, I give you this, I give you that, I get a piece of bread for it, that's what I get for it, and the bread itself, I eat the bread what it was in the medicine, yeah, my cousin who is here now, she is so sick, poor thing. So anyhow I, I, they took me down and I was suppose to bring in the lunch. I went there, I was going there, the truck come, the truck go, they left there, they leave me there, you gonna go to the camp, back to the *lager*, not to my, where my cousin was. It was a raining, pouring, yoy was shivering, I was shivering, I was all wet and I have to wait there, and I said I was the [unclear] I said, "Now, this is it. I can't take it no more. I gonna kill myself." I said to myself, "I gonna kill myself" and no more, this I can take it no more. I just can't take it no more. While I was thinking all of a sudden a truck stop, "Up, up, *schnell, schnell*, what-- alone, alone on the truck. "Where they gonna take me? Where they gonna take me," I said to myself, "Where they gonna take me? Where they take me? They take me to the crematorium, probably," I said to myself, "Where would they take me, they don't take me to my cousin, where my cousin worked," so that's it, I wanna kill myself, let it be finished, that's all, let it be finished, and I was already happy, I gonna die. I gonna, they take me to the crematorium. All of the sudden, they dropped me off one *Lager*, "In, in, in," *schleped* me in, where they? I am in a *Lager*, I am not in the crematorium, they don't put me to the crematorium, I'm in the *Lager*, in the barrack, and underneath of the floor, cement floor, I was all wet, nothing just a blue top dress on me, just a blue top dress on me. On the floor and I was crying, what do you think my...? [tape two, side two ended]

*Tape three, side one:*

GS: This is tape three, side one of an interview with Sylvia Ebner.

SE: Okay, so, you are ready?

GS: Eh, yes.

SE: Good? So I, I, she recognized my crying and she can tell, "Sylvia, what are you doing here? They didn't bring you back to your, to your sis--cousin." "What are you doing here? You were suppose to go to your mother?" "They didn't bring me back either. They dropped me off here. I am on that, up there, you know, on one of the..." She right away come down underneath with me, even so it was the ground, the cement floor, she give me back one of my top, the top of the pajama, and I hang up the, not just the top of the pajama, she gave me back all my pajama because I was, I have to take off my dress otherwise I would of stayed in the red dress, I would stay in the red dress, you know? She gave me back my pajama and I hang up on the side, we were crowding in, so I was hanging up somehow, I don't know how it stand that dress to dry up, I don't know. We were crying together, but we were together. It was like a, I don't know how to tell you, she was happy I was there and I was happy she was there, I mean, we have each other, we have each other. This place every morning, we have to get out and they took us to work. They catch us to work. We didn't volunteer but the Germans came--but I forget to tell you I was six week in that *revier* [sick quarters], under six week they came to select us Mengele, seven times. Well, my friend was there for other six weeks, five week and she was also on this side, there was a time on this side they select me next to her and I'm still alive. Six, seven time, I was there six week, seven time they was, she was there. He was there to select me, to put me to the crematorium and they never select. Would you believe it? I'm still here. But anyhow I was with her already so she have me, and I have her. We weren't gonna go separate nowhere, no matter where we going, we go together, we are going together but she was very smart. She was, not just smart, I was a *nebbish* all the time, I don't know why, my father didn't teach me for that. My father always said, "You should be strong, you shouldn't let yourself go, stand up and always for yourself," but this time every morning they come to select us to go to work, and they schlepp you, they pull you, they pull you. I have to--you have to go. If she, if they catch me, she come with me because we don't want to be separate, we don't want to be separated. Every time the poor kid when, they catch me all the time because we watched the Germans which side they coming. After nine you can go around, around the block, not nowhere but around, till nine o'clock you have to stand five line, five in one line, you know? After nine they said, "Okay, release." But we cannot go into the, into the house, into the building yet because they come to choose us to work. They catch me, so she come all the time too. There was a river, Vistula, the River Vistula, you heard about that river Vistula. It was raining, and it was such a big mud, the shoes was pulling off from your foot, from the mud. The clothing gets wet, they pull you to that work pit, they give a big piece of steel, steel piece, like this big, long, one

was holding on one end and one another was holding the other end, and we always push it together. We always went together, but that was nothing, we bring it over a narrow, narrow bridge, it was a narrow bridge. We have to walk with that on a narrow bridge, we bring it over to that side, the other two Jewish girls bring it back, again bring it over, bring it back, all day, we were doing that, all day. Bring the steel from this side to that side, from that side the other two people bringing it back. That was the job. I don't know how many days I was caught to do this, this things, but we already know what is waiting with, [unclear], we went back, and again, that was the work. Just to let us suffer, you know? It was raining and getting already cold, you know, November, almost October, November. One day finally they didn't catch us to work, then we can go in already to the room. Okay, we went into the room, we went into the room, my girlfriend went in, and then they catch me, catch me to the *Scheissewaggon*. You know what is the *Scheissewaggon*? At night, they don't let us to go to *Latrina*. There was a big wagon, you know like a, like here the, when they, when you build your house, you push it with that, with that, how you call that carriage? Or your dirt, you bring the dirt with that carriage or when you make your garden, you put the dirt on...

GS: A wheelbarrow.

SE: Wheelbarrow, okay? So we made on the wheelbarrow and we have to take it out. They catch me to take the wheelbarrow, my girlfriend was in already. That, we were already there in that place where we went to work, I don't know how many days already, how many, it was four weeks we were there already four weeks and every day we were caught to work, I was caught to work, she came along. This time I was caught to the, I'm telling you I was a *schlemiel*, they catch me, they catch me for *Scheissewaggon*, to take away the *Scheissewaggon* to the *Latrine* and push it down to the *Latrine*. It was raining and I was already so fed up, so fed up, I can't tell you. In the meantime, in the meantime before this *Latrine* thing, before this *Latrine*, one day [unclear], in the meantime one day, one day about after four weeks later they come, a German and a girl, come to select, what the heck to select? What for? Select to go to blood. Nobody wanted to go. Nobody wanted to go to blood.

GS: What is blood?

SE: They want to take blood from me.

GS: Oh to take blood, okay.

SE: Take blood from you.

GS: Umm humm.

SE: Nobody, they took up a few, they pull a few girl down, you know? And when they come back, they don't have the strength to work. They pull all the blood what they have in it. They pulled out all, that's what I said, if somebody was in scarlet, if somebody was in typhus, every people was put in this barrack, who was in typhus and become better, and who was in scarlet and become better, and they took the blood and from that blood they make the scarlet serum, you know? From that blood they were, they were,

they pull out from you, you know, they make the scarlet serum. I saw that there was a little girl upstairs, up, we were underneath and this little girl...

GS: In an upper barrack?

SE: Upper, upper, upper...

GS: A bunk, a bunk.

SE: Upper bunk, and she was, and they promised bread and the mother said, "Honey they don't give you bread, they just tell you. Don't go." "But I am so hungry," this young girl was. The mother couldn't talk her back, and she went, and she four, she come back with a four, hand and foot, she don't have the strength to stand. She was taken all her blood out, maybe they left a little bit, I don't know, just to crawl and she was crawling in. From that minute after we saw that, you know, the people coming back hardly can come back, walking on the, we were so scared, so scared, my girlfriend underneath. I tell you, if it would be, it was dark underneath, just at the beginning was light, you know, from the window. More deeper you go, it's dark. If there would be a mouse hole, we would go into the mouse hole, honestly. We got so scared. She was on that corner, I was on this corner, and was quiet like anything, then I saw when the German came with a plastic, black plastic a, a...

GS: Apron?

SE: Apron, full with blood, you know, full with blood. Pull the people down, pull the people from the *Covya* [bunk], she was--he was too lazy, he didn't know there was somebody underneath and we were so quiet. I still remember how I pushed myself to the wall. If there would have been a hole, a mouse hole, I would go in, I would go in the mouse hole. That was around, finished around three o'clock afternoon, she went--he went away. But I tell you that was a horrible thing, people was crying, screaming, pulling and when people was crawling back to the barrack. Three o'clock, all of the sudden *Zählappel*, three o'clock afternoon, *Zählappel*, what? Never have, *Zählappel*, three o'clock. It was four o'clock in the morning, and six o'clock at night, they were counting us okay?

GS: Ummm Hmmm.

SE: We said to our, to our girlfriend, we said for sure he don't get enough blood, and he solved the problem, everybody have to out and we'll finish, we're finished, that's all. We didn't know at that time what for they take the blood, we didn't know at that time, we heard it after. Anyhow we had no choice, we, my girlfriend and I, it was three barracks, it was *Zählappelling*, about 3,000 girls, you know, from three barracks was, and we were in the last barrack, and with my girlfriend we went up to the last minute, we were near the door, we had no choice, we have to go already. We were in the last line and they said--we were standing on the last line of the 3,000 peopl, 3,000 girls, three barracks, okay? And all of the sudden we were standing, all of the sudden they said, we were in the last line, and they said '*umdrehen*, '*umdrehen* means turn around, you know, turn around.

GS: Ummm Hmmm.

SE: We become the first one, till then we were the last, we were the last ones and we become the first one, this is it. March. March, where you march? We march near there where the shower room was, you know? That's it, we gonna, they gonna kill us. We for, we were sure they gonna take our blood out and that's it, they throw us in the crematorium. On the road about, we went about a mile and I, we heard that the Jewish girls who were helping to the, to the, the *Blockältester*, they were cleaning there, the *Blockältester* they were Polish girls in our line you know, hollering there take off your glasses because they gonna take you to a transport, take off your, you know, you tell them you know how to sew or you tell them you work in an office, that's why, you know, take off. So I figure Polaner that all, but they're friend, why would they holler that take off your glasses or, or you know how to sew, tell you are a sewer, but we were the first on the line, we had no choice, we had to march, and when I heard that, you know, and my girlfriend have glasses, she was, she was, she can see but she cannot work, she cannot sew. I said Dudush, her name was Dudush, take off your glasses and put it in somewhere, hide it somewhere. Well she hide it, she hide it under the, under the arm in the dress. It's really, they come a German and come a Jewish girl, a German girl, a German man and he was asking who is a sewer and who was working in the office, and I, right away, I learned to sew what I didn't sew at that time. I was fourteen and a half year old. But my father, my aunt was a dressmaker and she said you have to go to a corner to learn how to sew because you won't be there all the time, you must have something in your hand. My mother said, "No, I don't want her to go because if she sew, she learn how to sew...", my mother was a sewer here for ten year, my mother was working in a factory while she was in America. And she said, "If she gonna learn how to sew, she have to sew all her life," like she wouldn't know it, she knowed, she felt it. "I don't want her to go, to learn to sew." And my father said, "Yes, she must learn a trade." So at night my aunt was teaching me how to sew and I said right away, "I am a sewer." I was in the first line and my girlfriend, she come right after me. I am, I work in an office, she don't wait, so we were there from the 3,000 girls they choose about 35 girls all together, 35 girls from the 3,000. They took us in one place, you know? And then we march back and the rest of the girls march back to the barrack too. We all march back to the barrack. Then went one week, went two week, they still--they catch us again to work, catch us again to work, catch me to work, my girlfriend come with me because she don't want to be alone, and finally that morning they didn't catch us. She went in and they catch me to for the *Scheissewaggon*, she looked back, I wasn't there already. That was after three or four weeks and they choose us for this transport, and it was raining, and I was so disappointed and so much low. I was coming back from the *Scheissewaggon* walking slowly because then we can go into the barrack, okay? In the meantime, I met some people from the next town, the Tokaj and I asked her, "Where you from?" She said, "I am from Tokaj" "Do you know my cousin?" "Yes, I know Edith. I know Rachel," so we were already friends, you know? But we were walking slowly, and finally I went into my, my, I want to go into the house, into the barrack and she was in

another barrack. In a minute I run in to her, "I saw my girlfriend," you know? "My *Lager* sister." "Where, were you, I didn't you see you. I said, "They catch me too." "They want to put somebody into your place, we gonna go with the transport. Where, were you?" They want to put in--the Polish Jews, they want to put in--once they said the Hungarian, I don't know, you were there when the Polish woman said the Hungarian was very bad to us, the Hungarian people was very bad to us. He said to me, when I never hurt nobody, he was like wanted to kill me right then in that synagogue, you know? And the Polish people, I'll tell you between you and me, they were [unclear], they were there very long. No wonder they become like rude. They were looking only for themselves, you know? They were there three year and we were there one year, you know? So in a way they have the right because they were there too long and they become like rude and they steal and everything the food away, when they give it to all the *Lager* and all the people, and those Polish girls, they take it for themselves, for their relatives and everybody, and we don't have to eat nothing, bread they steal. We don't eat the food anyhow, I mean the soup, but the bread they take it, they cut it instead of giving us a pieces like that, they give us a pieces like that and they steal it for their relatives. Maybe I would do it too, if I would have, you know. But anyhow, she was screaming, "Where, were you? They taking us away to the transport." And first I went into my line to 35 people were--from the three barrack was 35, from there was maybe 15, maybe 10 from that barrack--and finally they took us to the shower room to take another shower room, that's for the shower, to take us a shower and they give us other clothing, you know. And finally they put us up on the train, winter, it was already winter--cold. It was November, end, beginning of Decem, December. They give us a whole bread, oh my God a whole bread, and some wurst--liverwurst and some jam. We couldn't believe it, we have whole bread; but why would they give us the whole bread? We were not thinking we gonna travel from the mid, from the middle of the week till the end of the week, you know, on the train. We were not thinking, you know. But in the meantime, when they put us into the train and it wasn't SS, it was *Wehrmacht*.

GS: Oh, okay.

SE: That was already *Wehrmacht*, okay. And they were not so rude, like the SS. They still have SS you pass before they bring us to the train, but they put us on that train and bring the bread and it was straw on the floor. That was a horse board, not a regular train. It wasn't regular train. It was a, you know, those that they bring the merchandise and the horses, and still not a regular train but still was ground clean, clean on the floor and they close the door and the German was sitting near the door, you know, and we were sitting where ever we can sit, on the floor. But in the meantime, the German was trying, sing us, was singing a song. I don't know what was the song but I still have the memory in my ear, "*The lolla, lolla ha, the scweitzza boone la ha*" [phonetic], he was in a good mood and something give me a good feeling, it must be, they must be taking us to a good place. Something like that, if you tell us, you know, something, the voice, he was like a [unclear] star, you know, when they were singing. Finally we went down from the train in maybe

three days to go, three nights, three days, cold like anything, there's no cover, nothing, but they have no cover either, they were just sitting on the door, you know, the two Germans were sitting on the door and we were going and going. Finally we went down from the train and we had to walk for the other big wagon, to go up on the big wagon. It was snowing, snow already and on the snow, I find a--not a plum, not a plum, a--pear. It was [unclear] on the floor, not on the floor, on the snow. Oh, my God, I didn't see a piece of fruit, a piece of food since we left Hungary, you know, and that, that, now that piece of pear, naturally we shared it with my girlfriend, you know, because she was there with me and they bring us in. It was a school, it was a, it was a school, a big building but they made out of the factory from it. It was in, it was in Oberhohen-elbe, Oberhohen-elbe, that was Sudeten Germany, become Sudeten Germany, and we were working downstairs, my girlfriend work upstairs and I was working downstairs, but I was worrying, how's she gonna work without the glasses? If she gonna put up the glasses, what they gonna say but she had no choice, but they don't say nothing there. It was private people, it was a factory to make lamps for submarine, radio and all kinds of tubes from glass in this factory. And we were, we have a German, a German woman, we have a German woman for four of us was taking care, and we had to work from morning six o'clock, till at night six o'clock, on one slice of bread, one potatoes and some kind of a soup, soup which wasn't so bad. At night when we go back then we get that one. And this woman was a Hungarian, she was a maid in Hungary, she speak a few words in Hungarian, who was taking care of us. And she was, in a way, nice and let me tell you one thing, between you there was also some nice people. This, you wouldn't believe it but there was human being between you too. We would die hunger if this woman didn't steal. One day she steal a piece of, a sandwich for me, one day she bring a sandwich for the other girl but not to say a word because she would be killed, if she would, they would see that, where we going, we were working on the *schleie*. I was working on the *schneife* machine [cutting machine] and we have to watch it. You know the lamp on the radio from, all the pieces is inside. My girlfriend was doing that, she put the pieces in those lamps. And I was making, make it sure with the *schleifen* machine, the machine was going like this, and making sure it's straight, every minute have to check if it's straight, that glass bottom because that had to be very straight. And we said, I never going to drink from glass no more, we have some kind of that, some kind of a powder, we have to put it, it was a hole here and have to put that powder there on top of the *schleifen* machine, eat up our hand. Yeah, you should have seen, we were full with, full with sh--with wound, because that thing what was strong for that, eating up the glass part, you know that eat up our hand, both of our hand because it work on both hand, and food, we were so hungry already if that woman once in a while didn't give a piece, we would drop dead right there, honestly. But in a way, they were taking us even for *spazieren*, would you believe it, every Sunday. They take us *spazieren*, the *Aufsehen*, *Aufschen*, the German SS, they take us for walk, they take us for walk, and we saw the free people was walking free, the people was walking free. We were even jealous for the birds because we



were closed in, fenced in. We were jealous for the birds, to see a bird free, to go and fly free, we were even jealous of that. And this *Aufsehen*--when we went at night too--I was working dayshift and my girlfriend was working nightshift but somehow like, we don't never have a watch, but like we synchronize it, we met at the toilet every night. We met, we didn't have no food but we would say hello to each other and there was a washroom and we met there every night, just like the watch was ringed and you wake you up, like, like a, we don't even know what time is it, what time was it, we have no watch, but we met every time at the toilet because during the day we cannot meet because she was working at night. There was an *Aufsehen* sitting on the corner, sometime you don't know if he going tell them, "*Aufsehen* can I go *rausgehen*, can I go out to the toilet?" If you wake them up, they could be so mad they could of kill you. If you don't gonna say, "Can I go out," and if they catch you they figure you gonna, you wanna walk out on you--on them. Anyhow I was sewing for the *Aufsehen* a blue shirt--short. I didn't get nothing for it, absolutely nothing, nothing, not even a potato, but she find out I am a sewer, you know, so she bring me material, by hand, there was no machine, by hand I was sewing her shorts. We were there, working there till May, last week of April, a slice of bread, one potatoes, and a little bit of soup. We were so skinny, if we would have to wait, stay there for two more week, I don't think I would make it. I hardly have the strength to work already, to work from 6 o'clock till 6 o'clock at night, not to eat, you know? And it was just horrible, you just can't, can't get no food. Once I find when we went around the kitchen, there was a kitchen, their kitchen, not ours, a pail of potatoes, and I find it. You know what a delicacy that was? I never eat such a good thing like that, never in my life, never.

GS: Is this the place where you were liberated?

SE: Yes, this is the place I was liberated. How we know, we didn't know we liberated. We just notice in the morning we going, one night, you know, I want to meet my, my girlfriend, there was no *Aufsehen* and there was nobody at the toilet, you know toilet was blocked up, blocked up right away, right away blocked up the toilet, everything. There was no work. They come back, you know, the, the, my girlfriend, they come back. Everybody was in the room at once, you know, in that big, big room. It was a big, big room and we look out the window, the German was escaping. Just they look like exactly like we did, with the horse and buggy they bring their stuff and they were going, they were trying to escape. Exactly that's the way we look like they were escaping from the, it was coming the Russian, I was liberated by the Russian, and they were running away not to get caught by the Russians.

GS: And when was this?

SE: That was the end of April.

GS: 1945?

SE: 1945, end of April, first of May.

GS: Okay.

SE: First of May they come in and they said, "Girls you are liberated." We couldn't believe it, we are liberated. We hardly have the strength to walk already. Only the thing, then they took us, the Russian took us to a camp where they have, there were the soldiers, there was food there, but they couldn't give us fast the food because we would drop dead, if we would eat too fast the food. Slowly, they were trying to build us up, slowly, slowly.

GS: What city was this in?

SE: Oberhochenalbe, Oberhochenalbe that was in, that was in Oberhochenalbe. In Czech they call it Rychlavi. That was Sudeten Germany, that was Sudeten Germany. Yeah, and from after that, when I come home, I was 40 like now, kilo, 42 kilo, after six week liberation, after six weeks eating, 42 kilo. I was so skinny like, I mean even then.

GS: So you went home to look for your father?

SE: Then I went home and my father voice came to me, first thing you will try to go home, but how you gonna go home? They, the Russian, they put you up on a train again, again horse and buggy train. The girls who went to Hungary, who went to Czechoslovakia, you know? They give us a piece of bread, a nice piece of bread, they were giving us salute with gun, you know? And we went about couple hour, and all of the sudden the train stop, and we were getting already hungry, toilet, we have to go to toilet. How toilet, who gonna go to the toilet, how can you go to the toilet again? You are in the cars, so one of the, two of the girls go down, two of the girls go down and she said, "We gonna go to see, we gonna go to see where is, where are we?" They are coming back and two Russian soldiers running after them like crazy, they want to catch them and we heard that, we saw that *Davay chasy* [Give me the watch.] We don't know what is *chasy*, *chasy* is clock. They were trying to tear off her, from her hand the *chasy*. I don't know where she took the *chasy* but she had the watch. *Davay Borisa* we don't know what is *Borisa*, they want to make fun for the girls. You don't know how we were, like do you ever see a chicken *kop*, chicken *kop* [head] and the chicken run out going the... [tape three, side one ended]

*Tape three, side two:*

GS: This is side two of tape three with Sylvia Ebner.

SE: So when this two soldiers come in and we saw if she was carrying down the watch and want to catch her, we like, we were running out, flying out from the, but where we gonna go? There is no, there was no train, there was no nothing to go, the station was bombed down, we have to walk miles and miles till they meet the other station where it wasn't bombed down, okay? So we were sitting there for a couple hours and then comes the night, you have to do something, you have to rest and then you go further, we were, this girl, my girlfriend, Edit, Zsuzsi my other young girl and Zsuzsi and me, we were four and one more, one more girl from, also from Hungary, we were all together the three of us, well, the four--the five of us, you know? We were starting to go to somewhere to lay down. So where can we lay down? This time we have already not a blanket, those horse cover, what you call those? Cover, you know some cover, those light thing, those light things...

GS: Not a blanket?

SE: Not a blanket, regular blanket but...

GS: Like a throw?

SE: Throw, like a wools, gray things, you know, everybody was the first thing you bring yourself, a cover and when they said we gonna go, so we are one underneath and we were one on the top but I have to go to the toilet, and toilet, there was no toilet, so go to the bushes. So my girlfriend, I told my girlfriend, I have to go and I come back, can you shut it for please a minute. [tape shut off temporarily] So from that station, we went, we have to make another station to go home, that was still in Sudeten Germany, and we went walking to meet the, to get, to meet the next train where it wasn't bombed down, the road, you know, you should have seen all the soldiers, it was horrible. All the soldiers, all around, Hungarian soldiers they were coming back from the front, Jews was coming back and Russian, Russian soldiers. Finally, we are, I am, we were watching very much so, walking, walking, walking, and we met, they said afternoon gonna go on train from here. We were sitting down, there was no food. We eat already that food up.

GS: Sylvia...

SE: Yeah..

GS: I'm sorry to interrupt you. I'd like to, to have you tell me what happened when you got back to your village?

SE: My town?

GS: Yes.

SE: First thing, you wanted to go back to there but you have to watch all the time from the Russian because they gonna catch girlfriend, and I, we went to Budapest, she met her, we met the Joint,<sup>5</sup> there was already Joint, there was already the Joint. They give

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<sup>5</sup>Joint Distribution Committee.

us thousand five hundred florin. That was enough for a good slice of bread, a good size of bread, you know, a haircut or something but her aunt was waiting there because everybody know in this place if any Jew comes home from Germany, they going to go into that Joint place, they call it Joint. All the Jews went in that place, and they give you food there right away, they give you thousand, five, and some clothing, some, some...

GS: Okay.

SE: Clean clothing, you know? And her aunt right away took us down to her house, her house in Budapest. She said, "Your mother is here." She met her mother already home. I didn't know my cousins, where are my cousins. Your mother is here so she was very happy and your boyfriend is coming. Your boyfriend is home already. She was very happy. Anyhow they put me up, next day, my *lager* sister and her aunt take me to Budapest, to the train station. In the meantime, I have a haircut, put me up on the train station and in the train there was a, I recognize it. He, she recognize me, he recognize me, I don't recognize it. He was already an elderly boy and he recognizes me as a child, you know? And he was going home too and the train arrived from morning till at night, 12 o'clock where I live, and the train station already my uncle was waiting, who, he came home by himself and one of my cousin who visit me here, 1983. She went back and four days later was died, she dead.

GS: She was, in Hungary and then...

SE: She was here and...

GS: [unclear].

SE: She was in Hungary, she was in Hungary and I came out from Hungary too, you know, and she stayed there because she married, and then she come out to visit me, she was here, four days later she died. But, but what I want...

GS: So you got home--you're home.

SE: I got home, I got home to my town. The minute, you must shut this, shut it for a minute. Shut it for one minute.

GS: Okay. [tape shut off temporarily].

SE: So when I went home, my uncle was waiting at the station and my cousin. Right away they went there, I was happy because they were home. In the morning, I must go to see my house, I must go to my home. I thought I gonna find my home the same way like I left it, although I know they went in to steal, but I didn't figure they gonna steal everything from the house. It was full with horse manure, the house, we have a flat house, one house, one floor, everything goes in one floor. The store was in one floor, the house, the rooms was in one floor and it was full with horse manure. The German put it in, horses, all the Jewish houses, where they were a Jewish home and the next town, two mile away, where I went to school, every house was occupied with the horses and the store, my store, my parents have a store because we live in the country and we have animals, even the store was taken off. It was about that far up, about one wall was high, about maybe a yard and a half, all the stone because everything was built in stone there in Hungary, we have stone

mine near us, everything was built in stone, they still, even the top of the clay, we have red clay tops in the houses, not like here the houses, every house was red clay, but the houses was standing but no window was, not one window was, that all the windows was torn out because people said the German horses was looking out of the windows. It was full with horse manure. What I find, I find one of my doll, but I was never suppose to play with that because somebody, one of my cousins from here, America, she has, he has the factory. The Ideal Doll factory was his. And he send it to my one of my cousins and when my cousin growed it out, she give it to me, that Sylvia, she give it to me. I find that doll sitting on the top of the horse manure and my mother's sewing machine. That's all I find, nothing at all, not one old dress what my mother was wear to remind my mother for that. But I saw half, about a yard and a half of one wall was standing, and the minute I saw this wall I know I find the jewelry, because before we went to the concentration camp, before we went to the ghetto, my father, he was a very smart man. They give in to the townhalls whatever they think we have jewelry, but my mother lived in America for ten year and all her money she was saving for the house if she come home and jewelry, she was bringing home a lot of jewelry, and they never knowed that, he have, she have it. And my father before they took us to the ghetto, he opened up in the store, one hole and put in a straw and put in cement, cement it in except the straw was standing out and she send, he send me in to see, go in the store and see where you find fresh cement because the stone was cemented, all cemented together, and you find the fresh cement, there I put the jewelry and he said, "Go in, first you, and then mommy." I said, "Why can't..." I said to myself, "Why can't we go together?" you know? I couldn't understand it. When I come home and I saw that the only wall was standing, full with grass, the grass was up to my knee, the house was full with horse manure, not a knife, nothing I find it, everything was torn. I said, I gonna go over one of my neighbor house and I gonna ask a knife from her. And I said, "Can you come with me, Mrs. Sznuznyk?" In the meantime, I find on the floor, the chicken was drinking from a beautiful dish what my mother was the dowry in Europe. When somebody get married, they don't give money, they give present, dowry, they call it, they call it...

GS: Yeah.

SE: All kind of ceramic or things like that and my mother never let me to, never let me to drink from that, eat from that thing because we gonna be good when you got a big, when you gonna be a big girl. I said, "Where did you take this Mrs. Sznuznyk?" "I don't know. One kid bring it here." So naturally, I right away picked it up. In the meantime, I look in the, in the stall, I saw my cow, my mother cow there. "How come-- the name was *Pirosh*, red<sup>6</sup>. How come *Pirosh* come here?" "Ahh, they take mine and I take yours." Not even think to give me back, no way, or the house to give me back, no way. I have to go to the city, her had to fight it, that was my father's house and I want it, I want back the house. "No, the German give it to us," you know? So I said, "Why don't

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<sup>6</sup>*Pirosh* is Hungarian for the color red.

you clean it up? Why did, why is it full of horse manure? Why don't you clean it up?" Anyhow when I saw that, you know, the doll and the house was full, the ground was full with big, big thing, you know? So this, when she saw, I took out the jewelry, she saw I'm taking out the jewelry, she was looking, what are you doing there? "You know, what?" I said, "You see my father outsmart you." My father, and that's the jewelry I save my life when I escape from Hungary to go to Canada, that was the jewelry I bribed down the Czechoslovakian *gendarme*, police. The, if not that, I wouldn't find it, I wouldn't be able to come, because I need some money to bribe them. They catch us. The Czech, the Czech catch us. Can I use your phone for a minute?

GS: Certainly. [tape shut off] [ tape three, side two ended, interview end]