



UKHMF TESTIMONY TRANSCRIPT – JUDIT BRODY

[Testimony: 1hr 34 mins. Artefacts: 13'.33"]

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10:00:00:00

Judit Brody

My name is Judit Brody. I was born on the 23rd of April 1933. I survived the Holocaust in Budapest, Hungary.

[Fade to black and back up]

10:00:16:05

Interviewer

Um, so um, er, it's a question that we've just been discussing Judit, but whether or not you've ever um, shared experiences before. Whether you've recorded your testimony before and how much your family know of your past?

10:00:29:10

Judit Brody

Um, I have record-, recorded I-, I have written my memoirs a long time ago. Um, only for my children. But then the, um, International Wallenberg Foundation, they, they found me - or I found them. And they actually published something with the title *We Were There*, and so, er, they published um, the part this, this part, which is, which is relevant of -, from my memoirs. I sent it to them. And I also, er, was interviewed and actually I have a,a, um, a video tape. It was obviously a long time again when tapes were in fashion. But I don't know who and what, er, organisation it was. I think it was some, something American. Er, an American university or something. I don't know, but that was, I would say, about 30 years ago.

10:01:44:10

Interviewer

Okay. And when you got the invitation to be part of this project now, and to record your testimony officially in this capacity. How did you feel about it? And how much persuading did you need to take part?

10:01:55:15

Judit Brody

I didn't need any persuading.

10:01:58:23

Interviewer

Why?

10:01:59:08

Judit Brody

I, I, myself -, well I contacted them. I contacted Max. Er, a, a friend of my daughter wrote me an email and said that her 92-year-old mother-in-law was, er, interviewed and um, will I be also interviewed? And if not she gave me Max's address and immediately I contacted him, yes.

10:02:27:13

Interviewer



So you obviously feel duty bound to record your testimony? Is that right?

10:02:33:08

Judit Brody

Well I don't feel duty-bound, but er, I think it's a good thing for future generations.

10:02:40:22

Interviewer

How easy do you find it, talking about your past?

10:02:47:22

Judit Brody

It's perfectly alright for me. It's, it's perfectly alright. And especially I am, I am very proud of my father who, who behaved heroically all through, um, and sure, it's a good thing that people know about it.

10:03:07:10

Interviewer

So in part you're doing this for his memory?

10:03:10:11

Judit Brody

In part, yes. Yes.

10:03:16:11

Interviewer

So I look forward to hearing much more about him in, in a, in a while. Um, why do you think it's important for future generations to learn what happened at this point in history?

10:03:29:06

Judit Brody

Well we, we teach history to children, er, in order to learn from it and not to repeat it. Cause if you don't remember it, you are bound to repeat it. Actually, it seems to me that even if you know about it, you are bound to repeat it, and even worse. So better not think about what's happening in the world now.

10:03:56:02

Interviewer

So that sounds like quite a warning really?

10:03:59:12

Judit Brody

It is a warning, yes.

10:04:01:02

Interviewer

Tell me more about what you mean by that?

10:04:06:08



Judit Brody

Well that's very, very difficult. As I said, if you, if you don't learn from it, you repeat it. So, one way or other, and er, it's, it's being repeated all the time. Even the United States now it seems that racism is, er, getting worse and worse. Er, at least this is what we hear from the news. Now I don't exactly know, ex, er, how exactly correct that is. Because I don't trust the media with that much. But er, certainly it seems to me that er, it's happening all over. I, I, um, not long ago in the Bodleian Library, in the Weston Library there was an exhibition about Armenia. And the Armenian genocide in 1916. And, um, I have read, um, Franz Werfel's book *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*. Er, which is about the Armenian genocide. And I read that as a small child. It was published in the 1930s and yet the same things happened in the 1940s. And now I re, re-read the book and it really was quite something for me.

10:05:45:11

Interviewer

And at this point in your life looking at the environment around us, that must be very depressing for you?

10:05:54:00

Judit Brody

It certainly is depressing, yes. It is, er, very depressing. I have children and grandchildren and a great-grandson and er, I worry about their life.

10:06:07:11

Interviewer

Do you feel that the events on the scale that they occurred in the Second World War can ever be repeated again?

10:06:17:02

Judit Brody

I think, er, that, er, some of them events that happened in the Second World War, er, will be repeated; not only repeated, but much worse. Um, of course not everything can be repeated. I don't think at the moment that there will be gas chambers and crematoria and so on. Um, but er, all the violence is, is going on now, and so, we, we have more technology. And, um, personally I think the Third World War is coming.

10:07:01:22

Interviewer

That's a depressing thing to have said.

10:07:04:11

Judit Brody

It is depressing, and what is depressing that, er, one can't, one can't do anything about it. I can't, I can't do anything about it and er, it's like, my children er, they have, they have their own lives, they have their own jobs, they have to keep, keep living and, er, bringing up their children. And um, so they, they really can't do much about it. On the other hand I personally, I feel that um, a lot of refugees, young, young men who are causing trouble um, in Europe, they should have taken arms against this famous so-called ISIS or Daesh or whatever it is called, instead of running away.



10:07:58:15

Interviewer

Okay. Um, let's leave that aside for the moment. Um, how do you feel towards the perpetrators in your life towards the Nazis? Is forgiveness possible?

10:08:08:24

Judit Brody

Er, No I don't think there is forgiveness possible. And, um, I've been to Germany once since then and um, I, I went on a walking tour with a friend of mine, er, in the Black Forest and, er, it was very nice. Obviously it's beautiful. This was in the late 1970s. And er, we, we went to, stayed, stayed in a, like a, er, bed and breakfast and our host, we discussed among ourselves was was like a person who might have been a guard in a concentration camp. So, um, we could, we just couldn't forget it. But this friend, her son, er, lives in Munich and brought up his children and in Germany, so maybe the second-generation um, can just forget about it. And I think, I think the Germans learned their lesson to a certain extent.

10:09:22:18

Interviewer

But it wouldn't prevent you - clearly - from visiting Germany now? You don't hold a grudge nowadays?

10:09:27:14

Judit Brody

I don't think I want to go to Germany. Because I when I, I look at people my age, I would, I would say, I would think, their parents or grandparents er, were killing my re, my relations.

10:09:50:10

Interviewer

And how much of the experiences that you had at the beginning of your life; do you feel have affected the way that you've lived the rest of your life?

10:10:03:02

Judit Brody

Well, um, I mean, the, the first, first um, basically 11 years of my life was, was wonderful. Um, and I, my parents shielded me from bad things that happened.

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For instance my father lost his job, um, and I, I didn't, I, I, although I knew that, but, but I, I didn't, I didn't feel bad about it.

10:10:35:20

We had enough to eat, and although, although we had a, a nanny, um, and she left in a, er, in 1939 because she had to leave, she was a German. And then after that er, we had another nanny who was a refugee from Poland and she, she only came in the afternoons. And I do remember er, that I, I was on holiday with the school, and my father came visiting and he was actually crying, he was telling us that this nanny who was from Poland but spoke German with us she was, she was taken away, and he knew what is going to happen to her. I, I didn't so it wasn't -, I, I was very -, my



parents were, you know, they were shielding us from, from everything. But then in 1944 er, they, they couldn't do that anymore.

10:11:38:21

Interviewer

And the harsh reality struck?

10:11:41:14

Judit Brody

Yes, reality stuck. Yes.

10:11:44:10

Interviewer

Before we talk about, um, your personal journey, um, do you have a, a life lesson that you'd like to pass on to future generations. You say you have a, a great-grandson already? At some point he'll be able to watch this interview and understand all about you, and your life and your father and your parents. Is there something that you would like to pass on to him?

10:12:08:21

Judit Brody

Unfortunately I don't think that my great-great grandson, or even my grandsons will ever be interested in, in watching what, what happened. I -, [*sighs*]. They have their own lives to live and as I, as I said they're not greatly interested in what happened in the past, unfortunately.

10:12:41:08

Interviewer

Your grandson's here today though, isn't he?

10:12:44:02

Judit Brody

I invited my grandson to come, especially because he, he is at university and he is doing a creative writing and film studies, so I thought he might be interested how this goes on. He has just finished his first year. Unfortunately, um, he's not all that well. That's why, that's why he's at, he's at home now. Um, but um, I hope that this will help, also help him get, get better. Er, because, because he's interested in this.

10:13:24:13

Interviewer

And to see the process of how it all works -

10:13:26:14

Judit Brody [*interrupting Interviewer*]

Yes, he can see the process, yes.

10:13:26:24

Interviewer

- well I'll make sure that I talk to him a bit more later on. Um, but, but there are generations, maybe it's not your grandchildren, I'm sure they will be interested, but



there are other, other younger people who will access this interview, and will want to hear what you have learned in your life. So what would you pass on? What message would you like to share of your experiences, a bit of wisdom.

10:13:53:09

Judit Brody

I don't have any wisdom. Fight for your life. Fight for your children's life if you have to. I don't have, I don't have much else. This is a cruel world, and a very stupid world, and it's been going on like that, but again, I-, you know. Learning from history, I mean, I, I went to school. I studied history and er, what did it tell me? Nothing really, but on the other hand er, one should live a live a, a life, a proper life. I'm not religious, but er, you, you should, you should do good things in life and not bad things.

10:14:55:17

Interviewer

Would you say that, um, you're an optimist or a pessimist?

10:15:06:24

Judit Brody

I mean for the, for the world I think I have already delineated it, described it, that I am a pessimist and especially as I said before with, um, er, technology. I would, I wouldn't er, be sure that er, nuclear weapons will be used. I think they will be used at some stage. When, when they were, the only weapon was throwing stones and then somebody came up with er, how do you call it [*laughs*] arrow, bow and arrow. Then I'm sure they said, "Oh, no, no, no. that won't, that won't be used after all, because that is far too dangerous." And I'm sure when they had bow and arrows and the gun was invented again the same, the same thing happened. Pe, people said, "Oh, no, no, no. We'll just keep the bow and arrows."

10:16:21:19

Interviewer

So do you feel that, that we're in just a permanent sense of decline, that we don't learn anything from our past and we are doomed essentially?

10:16:34:08

Judit Brody

Yeah, I think so yes. Sorry, sorry.

10:16:41:04

Interviewer

No but it's so, what's so interesting is that you've got such a smiley lovely face but you, you're [*laughs*] you're keeping it real.

10:16:46:24

Judit Brody

I am one of the lucky people.

10:16:48:20



Interviewer

You are, yeah. Okay, let, let's set that aside and possibly return to some of those, um, thoughts a little bit later on Judit. Um, you were born um, 23rd of April 1933. Um, tell me about your parents, your family. We need to hear a lot about your father cause he's clearly a very special man to you. And um, you had one sibling? Is that right?

10:17:12:09

Judit Brody

Yes, I had one sibling.

10:17:13:14

Interviewer

Livia, who was three years older than you?

10:17:16:17

Judit Brody

Yes, she was, er, my sister, three years older. And unfortunately she died at the age of 17 in 19-, yes, in 1947 er, in a cycling accident. So I never liked cycling and at that stage I gave up cycling altogether.

10:17:37:14

Interviewer

Um, but that was an unrelated death, wasn't it?, to the Holocaust?

10:17:42:04

Judit Brody

Completely unrelated to the Holocaust, yes.

10:17:43:03

Interviewer [*talking over interviewee*]

Something completely separate. But tell me a bit about your family please, and, and the kind of environment that you lived in. What was your home like? What was your community like? You said you're not religious, but were you part of a religious community? Just paint a bit of a picture of your life.

10:17:59:20

Judit Brody

Well. Er, we lived in a beautiful, er, apartment: four, four rooms, two bathrooms, maid's room, kitchen, er, and we had a maid.

10:18:14:12

Er, my father, um, worked in a big factory actually quite far away. He was er, depart-, a department head. He was head of the patent department or patent if you want to call it like that. He was a chemical engineer, and um,

10:18:33:15

my mother was just a mother, and a housewife. Um, and, er, as I said previously we had a, a nanny from, er, Germany, Fraulein, um, who spoke in German with us. So I was brought up bilingual er, German and Hungarian and always mixing, mixing the



two languages.

10:18:58:21

Um, and we lived in a, in a huge apartment block that was built er, originally by my paternal great-uncle, er, who made a lot of money as a journalist and then as a newspaper proprietor, and he also um, had a, a press shop to, um, print. A printing press to print it, the newspapers and books and everything; and that, that was all in that huge apartment block. Um, and much of the family lived in the same block. My uncle er, and their three sons, lived just above us. And a cousin, also two cousins also lived in various apartments in the same block.

10:19:53:03

Interviewer

What about the community in which you lived. Was it a very Jewish community? Was it religious? Did you go to synagogue? Were you observant?

10:20:00:02

Judit Brody

Um, we were, er, not observant at all. Er, every year we had a Christmas tree, and every year we had, um, Easter eggs and we beautifully decorated both the tree and the eggs and kept all the Hungarian customs related to, to these holidays. And my mother always said Christmas is, er, love it's the feast of love. Um, and um, we did, we didn't go to synagogue at all. Um, but my grandmother who lived um, in a small market town um, much like Witney where live now, but that was by the Danube. Um, and she always came up, um, to Budapest for the winter, and she already came, started coming up for the Jewish holidays, because she kept, she kept the Jewish holidays. And she went to the synagogue, but we nev, we never did.

10:21:15:30

Then, um, when H-, Hitler marched in Austria in 1938, and actually I just found out looking at um, papers that, um, it took my parents a few months, er, to decide but er, in 1939, um, we converted to Unitarianism. Um, so my, my parent thought, hoped that, that will save us, should anything happen, because Unitarianism is a, is a Christian religion. And then from then on er, since we went to school and the school required that we should go to religious instruction, once a week we went to the Unitarian Church for religious instruction and on Sundays, we, we had to go to um, church. Um, and we had to show, er, that we've been er, the pastor had to sign ev, everything. And we, we quite liked doing that, but it, it didn't mean that we, we became religious. I know I must add that at the moment I, I am member of the Unitarian Community in Oxford and that happened because just by chance I went to the college where there is a Unitarian chapel. And, er, I was told um, "Have you been to the chapel." "No." I said, "No." "come in, have a look, it's a very nice chapel with beautiful stained-glass windows." So we went in - and Pre-Raphaelite windows um, and a, and a big um, notice. Um, Unitarian service at 11, 11 o'clock. So on a rainy Sunday, er, because of the nice Sunday I will be, I used to go hiking. On a rainy Sunday, I went there at 11 o'clock. And the minister um, was there in the entrance and asked me where I come from, so I said Witney, "No", where "where do you come from originally?" So I said I come from Hungary originally. And immediately he said - in Hungarian and I say it in Hungarian – "egy Isten," that means there is but



one God. And then he started his sermon, again saying that and say, saying that we have a Hungarian visitor. So he called me and I joined [laughs] and er, now I call a Jewnitarian [sic]. Er, I don't believe, but I go sometimes to service, and mostly because I feel that people there er, um, who, who go to the Unitarian chapel, they're all thinking people. Er, they most of them were not born Unitarians, they were born everything else: Anglican, Methodist, Roman Catholic, and they were thinking and some of them changed three times, religion, until they finally arrived er, Unitarianism. So,

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Interviewer

So you have, you get intellectual stimulation from them, rather than a spiritual comfort? Is that right?

10:25:03:03

Judit Brody

Yes, yes, we understand each other more.

10:25:06:06

Interviewer

Okay.

10:25:06:20

Judit Brody

Yes.

10:25:07:12

Interviewer

Thank you for explaining that.

10:25:09:08

Judit Brody

Um, you want me to come back to, um,?

10:25:11:22

Interviewer

Well, I was going to ask you about er, this experience of your life, about whether or not um, you experienced any form of antisemitism personally. Er, but also then, also how it affected your father?

10:25:25:07

Judit Brody

Um, well the, the er, I remember er, seeing er, huge posters on, on the wall with ug-, ugly Jews and horrible, horrible things against Jews. Um, it did not affect me all that much, um, because I had a very good home life. My parents were, were very good, and never, never showed if they were upset they, they didn't really show it to us. Um,

10:26:01:12

I went a Lutheran school and that was for two reasons. Once, one be-, no three



reasons, one because it was a good school, second because it was close by, and third because if you went there as a um, in, in the primary school as a Jewish child, they would accept you in the secondary school. Otherwise they wouldn't accept me um, in, in a good secondary school. So I was absolutely aware of that. And also we were very aware of who was Jewish and who wasn't Jewish. Um, but um, I think I said that before. We always asked our parents - and that, that I would say in the '40s, even before 1944 - um, if they met somebody, er, a stranger, we always asked our parents, is that person Jewish? And my par-, my parents always said, "Don't ask such a question. A person is a person, it doesn't matter. whether somebody is Jewish or not." However it, for us children it did matter to a certain extent. We understood each other more. I, I don't know why that was, somehow it was in air.

10:27:28:16

Interviewer

Okay. Do you remember any feelings of antisemitism towards you at that stage? Any of the laws that might have affected your life or anything like that?

10:27:14:15

Judit Brody

At, at that stage it was only that my father lost his job. Um, but er, he was quite strong, strong really. As I said before, a very strong person, and he found himself an architect, um, although as I said he, he was a chemical engineer, nothing to do with architecture, and they bought a cart, a carriage and a couple of horses, and they, they started building, um, a, how they built little, little houses. Er, and I think the man, they actually managed to build er, one, one lot of [*laughs*] a coup-, a couple of houses and sell them. I, I don't know. But certainly um, life changed and also although he was, he was older, at some stage I couldn't tell you exactly the year but he was asked, um, to, to go to forced, forced labour camp. He had to go to forced labour camp.

Um, I don't remember his going, I remember his coming back. Because he only spent a few days there, he was too old. And he had some kind of an, an injury on his arm, I don't know how it happened, but I do remember that, um, that he came back with some injury and it was, everything was okay again.

10:29:25:02

Interviewer

Do you remember much of what your parents were telling you was going on at the time? Do you remember them telling you about the outbreak of war? Or how much awareness did you have at that age of what was going on in Europe? You were only kind of five, were you, at the wartime?

10:29:39:21

Judit Brody

I was six when the war broke out.

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Interviewer

Six.

10:29:42:21



Judit Brody

I think I knew everything but didn't take it personally. It's,

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Interviewer

You just knew that it was happening?

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Judit Brody

I knew it was happening. My father listened to, to London. Er,

10:29:58:24

Interviewer

And you have memories of listening to Hitler, Hitler on the radio don't you?

10:30:02:09

Judit Brody

I have, I have memories of Hitler on the radio and, and my mother screaming away to the, to the nanny," That's your friend, that's your friend, listen to your friend." [Laughs] er, because she was German of course, and so... But again, she didn't take it all that seriously, she left when she had to, um, but um, er, yes, I knew everything but it did not affect me as a person.

10:30:34:19

Interviewer

Your fa- - so this is the nanny? There were two nannies? Is that right? You had a Polish refugee nanny -

10:30:39:20

Judit Brody

Yes.

10:30:40:00

Interviewer

- and a German nanny?

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Judit Brody

Yes.

10:30:41:14

Interviewer

- so it was the German nanny that your mother was shouting at?

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Judit Brody

Yes, and she was, she was there for I think five years or so, and then she left. And then came the Polish, only for a very short time.

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Interviewer

And then she had to leave?

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Judit Brody

And then, well, she was transported.

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Interviewer

And do you know what happened to her?

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Judit Brody

Well, I suppose what happened to all the other Polish refugees. So better not talk about that. It's that this that would happened to her was, she was killed., and her and in fact and her family. And I knew that but didn't take it very personally.

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Interviewer

Do you remember being upset about that? Or maybe you were too young or shielded from the facts?

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Judit Brody

Well - as I said before - my father was upset, upset about it, and I remember my father being upset. But it didn't upset me. I lived a very selfish life.

10:31:44:07

Interviewer

Well you were a child. That's what children are supposed to do isn't it? That's the job description. *[Laughs]*. Um, can you tell me any more about -, and you said you don't remember your father being taken away or his absence, you only remember his return? But were you aware that Jewish men were being taken? Did you know much about what was happening to them?

10:32:05:01

Judit Brody

I was aware that Jewish men were taken, because I had cousins and also sons of my parents' friends, er, who were taken. Er, so I remember, I very much remember that. Um, and er, also there was always, always talk about being in-, intern.

10:32:29:11

Interviewer

Interned.

10:32:30:03

Judit Brody

Interned. Er, again young men being interned. Er, but if, if it affected me in retrospect I would say no, it didn't leave a mark for the rest of my life. It might have, have affected me then, when I was seven or eight, but now that I am 83, er, it, it's gone.



That, that, that -, I can't say affection, but that affect has just, just gone. It wasn't personal, that's why.

10:33:13:05

Interviewer

Okay. Um, let's jump forward now to, er, Germany invading Hungary. Er, this was in 19-, March wasn't it, 1944?

10:33:24:14

Judit Brody

The Germans invaded on the 19th of March 1944.

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Interviewer

And you were ten?

10:33:31:05

Judit Brody

And I was, yes, just coming up to 11. I was coming up to 11.

10:33:37:05

Interviewer

Were you aware of that invasion? Were you aware of what that meant for your country and you as a family?

10:33:44:02

Judit Brody

I was very aware of that inflation. Um, because um, my, my parents were very upset, I remember that. Now, I might be wrong, I don't know, have you, um, has it, has -, which date was, but I think it was a Sunday. If my memory might be wrong, but I was out of the house that day, in the morning, and coming home, so I could have been in church. Coming home I remember my father made phone calls er, which he didn't usually make, first thing in the morning, and talking very excitedly. Um, so I remember great excitement um, and I was, I knew that the Germans came in and occupied. So I was aware, I was aware of that, and I was aware of my parents getting very upset about it.

10:34:50:17

Interviewer

And it was at this point that you stopped going to school?

10:34:54:14

Judit Brody

We stopped going to school a few days later, I don't exactly remember when it was. I don't, I don't exactly remember. It must have been a few days later.

10:35:07:14

Interviewer

Okay, around that time anyway. Um, and then tell me about your grandmother, because she decided to leave, didn't she, but your father put his foot down?



10:35:18:04

Judit Brody

Well, my grand-, my grandmother, as um, as I said before, she lived um, in the south of er, of Hungary. Um, the very famous place called Mohacs um, which I knew very well because we used to spend our summer holidays there and swim in the Danube, wonderfully. Er, but the, because um, the winters are, in Hungary, can be very cold, and she was um, a widow on her own, she always came up to Budapest for the winter. And on the 19th March 1944 she was still er, in Budapest, but when she heard this um, what was happening, immediately she said, "I'm going home." Um, I have to look after my house, my possessions. And my father said immediately, "You are not going home." You are here, staying with us." And my fathers' word was my father's word. And so she had to stay. And of course that saved her life because all her friends and relations - well with a very, very few young, young teenage, couple of teenage girls who survived - but everybody else, er, disappeared. And she lost her house of course, and all her belongings, but so what? And by that time, she also understood that life is more important than stuff.

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Interviewer

She lost her house, but kept her life, much more important, as you said.

10:37:04:09

Judit Brody

[Coughs].

10:37:05:11

Interviewer

Um, but daily life had started to change for all of you, didn't it? How, how did it affect you?

10:37:14:08

Judit Brody

Well at, at first, um, there was a just a lot of going on and er, I sup-, I suppose, I don't remember, but I kind of suppose that food was brought, was bought. Um, that is the most important thing. Um, and um, there was a lot of coming and going within, within the block, because they, they were all relations and friends, um, living in the same block. Um, and um, and that, that was, that was about all there. We stopped going to school, but we enjoyed it, we had a table tennis in a, a table for table tennis in, in the nursery. Um, which we could fold, it was folded in half usually, but we could open it and just if the room was just enough, er, so that we could play table tennis. And my father he played a lot of, um, er, I think it's called solitaire, er, patience. And, um, and that, to calm his nerves. Er, and um, and then my grandmother moved in with us, because she use, usually spent the um, the winter in, in a *pension* with other old, old ladies. Um, but she had her room and, and er, she had meals but um, she did move in, er, with us. Er, well luckily we, we had a, we had a spare room because we had four rooms. One nursery for rooms? Five rooms? Why?

10:39:16:10

Interviewer



You had enough space?

10:39:17:19

Judit Brody

We, yeah, yes. Yes.

10:39:20:05

Interviewer

Um, but it was soon the case that your house became declared a yellow star house. Do you remember that happening?

[Cut for card change]

10:39:27:11

Judit Brody

Well I don't ex-, exactly remember happening that ours is a yellow star house, but, um, I think we were very lucky about it. And, um, there is a very good book by, er, Tim Cole, called *Holocaust City*, which is all about, um, how the yellow star houses came into being. And, um, well it took a, took a long time, so it wasn't in March, and I don't think even it was in April. I don't exactly know when it was. Um, because they had a lot of discussion about it, um, w-, w-, which hou-, which buildings should be yellow star houses. So, um, we were very lucky and we were also very lucky in the way that my parents could invite people to come and move in with us. Um, and so they invited, um, a family who were close friends, um, mother, father and two boys. And, um, then they also invited a family with, er, one daughter. Mother, father, one daughter, and the daughter was my sister's best friend, schoolfriend. So, there were five, five kids in the, in the house in the, in the apartment. And, um, they were accommodated, um, some in what was actually the, er, [pause] the living room and, er, oh my parents' bedroom and the dining room and we children, we were, we were in the, at least three, three girls were in the nursery. Um, and I think the two boys had to sleep with the, with their parents. Er, it was quite strict that boys and girls shouldn't sleep in the same room. Er,

10:41:51:02

Interviewer

But by inviting people into your house I guess you had a little bit more control than everybody being thrust together. You had a little bit more dignity about who you lived with?

10:42:01:19

Judit Brody

Well, they chose the people, um, and that, that, that was very lucky that, um, they, they could do that. Um, and since, since our rooms were fairly, fairly large, er, and it, I think it went by, not by the size of the room but by the number of the rooms, um, it, it wasn't really all that overcrowded. Of course there, and there were two bathrooms, um, so it, that wasn't too bad either.

10:42:37:12

Interviewer

Do you remember how you; you and your family passed the time in the, in your



house?

10:42:42:16

Judit Brody

Well we, we children, er, had a wonderful time. Er, we played in the nursery, er, and, um, the parents of course had a terrible time, but, um, my mother tried to keep order, cleanliness - that was one thing - sharing the bathroom, which they have never done before. Um, was a new experience. And, um, also sharing the kitchen so my, my mother, said, um, there was th-, three housewives, er, who really never, never cooked before, because they had, they had maids. Er, but she arranged that we should all eat together, and, um, I think, every day or every week another m-, mother should do all the cooking. So, there shouldn't be an-, any strife in the kitchen. Er, and of course they had to do the washing up as well. Um, so it, it was, it was, a really co-, fairly friendly. And there were no, no great, no arguments, no arguments. And at lunchtime we all, er, sat around, er, [coughs] the table tennis table folded up and, and had our lunch together. And, um, it was very nice. And in the evenings, because it was quite a warm summer, um, a, a, um, not just, not just the, the grownups in our apartment but in all, all the other apartments, um, they s-, they all sat on the gangway, um, to enjoy fresh air. And we children sat on a, a floor lower on the, on the gangway. And um, they were smoking, my father was always smoking cigars, but the ladies smoked cigarettes, and so the ash was falling. And, um, well they were discussing the day and what happened, and so on. And we were just enjoying ourselves - children.

10:45:11:13

Interviewer

But there were very strict laws, weren't there, um, ordering when you were allowed to go out, or not. Do you remember that?

10:45:19:13

Judit Brody

Er, er, we were only allowed I think two hours, I think it was between two and four in the afternoon. I'm not certain. Um, but two, two hours and only to do shopping and to go, going to the doctor. Otherwise we were housebound. And we made the most of it.

10:45:42:18

Interviewer

Do you remember bombing? There was bombing before 1944?

10:45:47:10

Judit Brody

Er, no, there, there were, er, air-raids, er, a year or two even before, in the early 1940s and, er, the siren was just opposite in the street, it was terrible. And er, in the at night they woke me up and we had to go to the air-raid shelter, which was the cellar in the little house, um, which is another story. Anyways, so, and they were bombing before 1944, definitely, because I I remember my father coming home one day, and that must be '42, '42 or '43 and, and coming home and telling us that he, he has seen whole apartment blocks, um, bombed. Um, so it didn't start in 1944, in fact I don't think it got any worse.



10:46:46:19

Interviewer

You say that actually the children just got on with the days, and you played and you had a, a reasonable time. But do you remember fear creeping in and starting to be a bit scared of what was happening?

10:47:01:01

Judit Brody

There was always fear around. Er, I mean we, we also listened to what the grownups were talking about, er, which wasn't very pleasant, so we heard that. And then, at, at least a couple of times there, there, there were some raids, um, in the building. Um, once, um, we all had to go down into a little yard, um and um, it was either very early in the morning or very late in the evening, I don't know, but it was dark and cold, fairly cold. And, um, I, I don't know who they were, whether they were Arrow Cross people, police or gendarmes, all Hungarian of course, so, don't think that it was the Germans, it wasn't the German, um, soldiers, it was all the Hungarians who did that. Um, and, um, we were standing there for hours, and there was some shouting and so on. And in the end they took a few people away, um, with them, and let us go back into our apartments. And then some, some of those were taken away came back a few more days later and some didn't. That's all I know. Now there was another raid, and that was, um, during the day, it was at lunchtime. And I perfectly remember what we had for lunch, and I described this in a little booklet I have written some stories about this time, um, for the 100th anniversary of, of, er, Wallenberg's death. Um, there was an exhibition in the Wiener Library, and I've self-published some stories about this time. So you can find a story about, er, this raid. Er, what happened was, that we had, um, concierge of course. And the concierge was, was wonderful. Um, he had a, he had a daughters [*sic*] practically the same age as me - er, Edith Varga - and when I was hiding I was impersonating her, she, she never knew about that. But, um, anyway, coming back to this, so, when they came in to, er, came into the building and again I don't know who, who exactly they were, Arrow Cross probably. And, and the concierge, um, invited them into his apartment and gave them drinks. Meanwhile his wife ran around and alerted us, er, not just us but whoever she actually could - I don't think she managed to alert everybody. Um, to, that there are people here looking, looking for people, wanting to taking people away. [*Coughs*] So, we all filed into a little storeroom. That storeroom was storeroom for, er, paper for the printing press. Um, and so we were in between these huge stacks and rolls of paper, and we were told, complete silence, and she locked us in from the outside and took the key away. And all we heard was running up and down the stairs, and the Arrow Cross, "where are they? Where are they?" And the concierge was saying, "I don't know where they are, I don't know." m, "but all the food was on the table." Well, in the end they had to leave because, because I think, I think they could get into one or two apartments where the, um, wife of the concierge couldn't, couldn't, didn't manage, didn't manage to get to. And then they left.

10:51:30:09

Interviewer

What a brave lady, 'cause she risked her life didn't she? If she had been discovered hiding Jewish people she would've been -



10:51:39:12

Judit Brody

Both. Both

10:51:40:17

Interviewer

-both of them. Um,

10:51:41:04

Judit Brody

Both of them were risking their lives, yes. And I think they were risking their lives several times, but this is what I really remember.

10:51:51:22

Interviewer

It must have been a very frightening experience for you?

10:51:55:15

Judit Brody

Yes we were, it was fri-, it was frightening, yes. We, we were sitting there be-, behind, there were these huge rolls of paper, because, um, the printing press printed newspapers as well. So, it was newspaper paper, not just for books. Er, and we were just sitting there behind it, and complete silence, no coughing, no nothing.

10:52:22:22

Interviewer

Your parents then decided to try and seek Swedish protection, can you tell me how they did that?

10:52:30:21

Judit Brody

What happened one day was a couple of, um, detectives came, came to our apartment and, er, they kind of looked through my father's papers. I very vaguely remember that, er, they opened all the drawers of, of his, of his desk and looking through his papers and they, they took some away and left. And then my mother said, "that's it, we are doomed." And then they, they decided to go to the Swedish embassy and ask for protection.

10:53:50:02

And of course it was outside hours so they took the yellow star, er, down, and, um, or just put some clothes on which did not have the yellow star on, er, and went to the Swedish Embassy. They were very lucky because they got there and they got back, and they got the short passes, the temporary passports. Um, and, um, now, I don't exactly remember when those pieces of paper were, were given us, given us, because our, er, photo is on it. So, that couldn't have been that day, because I and my sister, we didn't go to the Swedish Embassy that day, so it must have been some other day when we went to the Swedish Embassy, but that I don't remember. Anyway, so we got these, um, papers eventually.

10:54:16:19



Interviewer

Which was at least some respite and it gave you a degree of protection, but it didn't stop your parents from trying to send you to the countryside?

10:54:29:00

Judit Brody

Well, at that stage it really didn't mean much. Um, somewhat later the Swedish Embassy also, um, gave, um, letters in which they say that the, this Shutzpass - temporary citizenship - is a valid passport. That's one thing. And another piece of paper which says that the person who owns this person has to wear the yellow star. So, it meant that we could go out, er, any time of the day, without the yellow star. But that had-, wasn't without its problems. Again I, I do have a little short story about that. Um, well I went out without it, um, so it wasn't-, nothing was perfect at that, at that stage.

10:55:49:04

Interviewer

Is that a difficult story to tell? Can you tell me that stor?

10:55:52:10

Judit Brody

Er, no, er, the, the the hiding. Um, although we were, we were, um, a yellow starred house, um, gentiles were allowed to stay there. Like, for instance the concierge could stay there, but also next to us lived a widower and, um, he was a solicitor, a very nice person, he didn't have any children, um, he had a girlfriend from the-, somewhere much younger, but he was a widower, and, er they had lots of cats. And, um, he was quite willing to help my parents, to get papers in the name of the daughter of the concierge. And he found somebody he knew who would take me to the country to Debrecen - it's a, it's a little, um, um, town in the, in the countryside in the west of Hungary. Um, it's quite close to the border and that plays a role in my, my story. And, um, so she took me, um, to this, um, um, town with my, with my papers that I, um, Edi, Edith Varga. Um, and my father is the con-, concierge. And, um, we went and stayed, um, in, in a little outhouse, er, which belonged to my guardian's, er, mother and sister. And, er, I had a wonderful time because they, they had a, an orchard. And it was just time for apricots. And, you don't know what apricots are like. I have bought the best apricots here and they are nothing in the comparison. It could be just my memory but it isn't. No, they were fantastic and I had a terrible [*Laughs*] diarrhoea and everything.

10:58:30:09

Interviewer

You'd indulged in too many apricots.

10:58:31:16

Judit Brody

Just eating all those apricots. Um, however there were some problem because my guardian, er, sort of liked the fiancée of, of her sister and he liked her, a little too much. So, there was a bit of a problem there. And at the same time two th-, two other things happened. One, one was that the Russians were very close to the border, and t-, my parents knew that. And they didn't want me to be under Russian



rule and them under-, still under the Germans. Um, because we, at that stage we could still, still write letters, and I wrote letters to my godfather, so called, er, the solicitor. And I was always asking about the family of cats that was my family, but he had lots of cats so that was perfectly alright. I was asking about the cats, um, so, but had the, had the Russians occupied Debrecen, er, we couldn't, we couldn't have been in

touch. So, that was the other thing. And the third thing was, that we went, we went on a, on a little excursion. And, um, on, on a cart with a horse, we went several times and I really enjoyed that. And once we went near the, near the airport. And I said, oh I've been to an airport before. And that wasn't a very clever thing to do because the daughter of a concierge doesn't go to an airport. Not in 1944. Does now, but not then. So they kind of thought I wasn't quite the right person. Cause the idea was that they -, my parents sent me to Debrecen to avoid the air raids, the bombing, which was okay, because there was bombing. But I made this mistake. But I mean, I was eleven, so, I was very proud of the fact that I've been to an airport before.

11:00:49:15

Interviewer

Yes, you weren't aware of how to edit your life, were you, to keep yourself safe. So, what happened next to you? Where did you go next?

11:00:57:09

Judit Brody

S-, so then, then my parents, er, had me, had me back. So I went back to my parents.

11:01:04:10

Interviewer

Is this when you went into another Swedish protection house?

11:01:08:19

Judit Brody

No. Er, in October - I think it was the 15th or something like that - there was a big change, there was a putsch in, in Hungary and the Arrow Cross took over. The Russians were very close and the Hungarian government, they didn't trust them that, you know, the Arrow Cross didn't trust the Hungarian government then, which was a little bit, you know, the Russians are coming, let them come in, because they are coming anyway. So, the Arrow Cross took over and then the whole thing really started in Budapest, because until then, um, practically everybody from the countryside was first put into ghettos and then deported to Auschwitz or other concentration camps. But the people in Budapest were not. They stayed in their yellow star houses, er, most of them. Obviously there, there were raids and everything, but most people stayed in the yellow star houses.

11:02:20:18

But after I think it was 15th October things have changed completely. They built a ghetto in Budapest, er, and they wanted to put all the Jews in there. But then not only the Swedes, but the Swiss, um, the Arrow-, not Arrow Cross, the Red Cross, er, the Vatican, and so on. There were, the, the Spanish, and I think also the Portuguese, the embassies, they started issuing, er, papers, protective papers. So,



those who had these, these protective papers did not have to go to the ghetto, which was in, and that was in November. You see, the putsch was in October when the Arrow Cross took over and then the ghetto and the international, so-called international ghetto, was established in November.

11:03:28:01

And so we had this Swedish passport, we had, we had to go to a Swedish-protected building. This were in one particular area of Budapest, and they, they were all, all the previous yellow star houses. And those who didn't have protection from those yellow star houses, had to go to the ghetto, they had to move out. And we had to move in there. Those who had protection in those protected houses they could stay. So they moved into, er, one of these huge, er, how -, buildings. And, er, there we were m-, we, we, five of us with my grandmother, we had one room. And, er, where there were lots, lots of others. And we didn't stay very long there, because one man managed to open some more Swedish protected buildings, and we had to move. Now, my mother took that terribly because we'd just moved and now we have to move again. She was terribly upset, but in actual fact I think it probably saved our lives, because people who stayed in that protected building had to walk to the ghetto in Jan-, sometime in January. Now, they didn't have many days in the ghetto, maybe ten or twelve, or something like that, but in the other protected building where we had to move from, that, the first one, they didn't have to walk to the ghetto, they could stay there until the Russians came. And also my father was the commandant of that, of that, er, building, and he took that very seriously. And many times, and, and endangered his own life, er, in order to save others. So we moved again, into this second one.

11:06:00:15

Interviewer

Erm, and is this the house where Leo Hochner was providing food?

11:06:07:01

Judit Brody

No, I must give a little bit of talk about Leo Hockner, because, um, unfortunately I didn't get very far trying, trying to, er, find out about him. He was originally from, I think what is now Slovakia, and I believe he was Jewish. He worked for a big factory; he was an engineer. He worked for a big factory called [Perutz?]. Um, he lived in Budapest. He hardly spoke any Hungarian. He had a wonderful apartment, and he ... in the apartment he was hiding, er, many, many people. In fact for a very short time after the putsch in October, when things went terribly wrong, my parents went there. H-, and he was hiding them, but then, then they came out for other reasons. Um, anyway, he was also a f-, fantastic person. Er, he was friends to all the, the Arrow Cross, and all the SS Germans. And so he was already hiding people, er, probably even during the summer, I don't know. He had plenty of food, plenty of servants, plenty of money. And um, so I said, I think he was already hiding, for some reason, maybe people from the countryside, who would have been otherwise deported, and he was hiding them. Um, he had a, a, well, a ceilings very high, a beautiful apartment. And he had a kind of a double ceiling, and then there was an alcove. In that alcove was a, was a, a statue. But it was also a door, and you could climb up and be up there. And he fed them and watered them and, I don't know how



he bathroomed them, but he did everything. But of course they had to be completely quiet. Um, anyways, so, er, he had plenty of food, he was provided himself. And then during those times, er, when we were in the protected building, um, so that is after November 1944, he would, um, ride in an SS car, with a, with a German and, and, and bring food to us. In the yellow star protected Swedish building and not only for us, but for all sorts of other people. And then once, er, when my f-, when my father would let a couple in who were banging, banging on the, on the door, on the big, big, huge entrance door of the building, um, was please let us in, please let us in. And my father said no, only, only people with protective papers can come in. No we haven't got anything come, let-, please let us come in. And then my father said, okay open the door, let them in. Because he had always guards at the door. So, he, he said, okay, open the, open the door, let them in. I know who they are. And he was an ear throat consultant, er, for the Opera House. So, you know, a medical doctor. Um, very aw- very important one for the opera. And so my father just had them sit down. Ha, ha, have a little quiet and give them something to drink and eat. And then, and my father was thinking what to do with them. Er, and, at-, fortunately Leo came at that stage. And my father said to him, he let them in, he let him in and my, and then he said to Leo, "Leo, here are some people, they need saving." And he opened the door and he-, they loved each-, they, they were good friends. They knew each other, and then Leo said, "I'll take them." And he took them in the SS car, or whether, whether it was Arrow Cross I don't know, to, to his place and he saved them thus. So, so he was a fantastic person, er, and I never found out en, enough about him, unfortunately.

11:11:21:01

Judit Brody

Well, thank you very much for telling us about him. He does sound like he was a very special man.

11:11:26:08

Judit Brody

In some ways, in some ways. I think, I think he was bisexual.

11:11:31:09

Interviewer

Hmm, that's okay.

11:11:33:00

Judit Brody

Yes, but then that was something,

11:11:35:18

Interviewer [*interrupting interviewee*]

Yes, that's probably something quite different. Um, there was one particular time when you forgot to cover the windows. And that had serious consequences.

11:11:44:18

Judit Brody

Um, well, of course you had to, er, blackout everything. Um, there wasn't much light inside because we didn't have any electricity, I mean, we didn't have any water, any



gas, but, or electricity from this point of view. So, we had little candles. I was a very good candle maker, and, um, I asked, "oh please, please Dad, let me, let me do the blackout." And he said, "yeah, why not." And then I did it, and one night I forgot one window and then the Arrow Cross man from -, they, they were all situated outside walking round, along and in cars and in carts and everything, outside the window. He, he came in and -, as I said, my father had guards at the front, at the front, but the were mostly to prevent people to go out, because my father knew that if anybody goes out that, that's a death sentence. Er, they will be taken to the Danube and shot into the Danube. Um, and some people wanted to go out because they just couldn't bear be, always being in the house, but no, the, the guards could prevent them go out. But they couldn't, couldn't prevent Arrow Cross come in, because they would shot- shots, sh-, through the door and everything. Um, so, an Arrow Cross man came in and came up and started screaming and screaming at my father, um, but luckily somehow my father managed to, to get rid of him. But when, when he left, er, of course I had, I, I was the one who did, who didn't do it and nearly killed, killed us, us all. So, that was the first time in my life I got a slap on my, on my face.

11:13:52:02

Interviewer

Which, from your father must've been a big shock because you worshipped him, didn't you? And he, he was -, but it shows you the, the stress that you were all under, that your life was in danger.

11:14:03:10

Judit Brody

Well, my father were my father I, I took it. I, I must tell you, it was terribly cold and I, I, I am comfortable here in the heat. But I can't stand the cold and of course heating, there was none, and so I was frozen, um, and w-, we all slept in one room, but we had kind of little mattresses. But I was so, so cold, that I, I, I rented out [sic] my father's warm pullover, I rented It out [sic]. And when it got really, really bad, then I, I climbed into his bed.

11:14:44:06

Interviewer

Um, we are now going to talk about liberation, because that's what happened next for you, isn't it?

11:14:51:16

Judit Brody

We were liberated on 16th January, and I must say in my memory - and I probably I, imagine it - a Russian soldier came in and he, he was dressed In a white fur coat. I doubt It. And I, and he was holding a sword. I doubt it. But this is how I in, in my mind I can see it. And, er, so we were liberated. We could go out, but you shouldn't go out, because it was very dangerous to go out. There was still a lot of shooting, this way, that way and, er, the Russians could take you, there could still be some, er, little knots of, of Arrow Cross who, who would take you. Er, because, um, the whole city, well, um, Pest, which is one side of, of the city, er, the whole of it was liberated on the 18th. The ghetto was only liberated on the 18th, two days later, the last. And the, the whole city that is Buda on the other side, that was only some time in February. I don't exactly know the, the date. So, there was still a lot of, a lot of, um, shooting



going on. Er, they, they were still shooting the Pest side from the Buda side, the Germans and the, and the Arrow Cross. Er, until the, sometime the middle of February. So, it was very dangerous, and of course the Russians could take you at any, any time, like they did. They took Wallenberg the next day. And, er, nobody knows what happened to him. So, er, we didn't go out. There were a couple of people I know who, who went, who went out to the street and they were killed. And one was the father of one of, one of the children, one of the boys in the, in the block. And I remember that, you know, his father was, was killed because, because they just felt, felt they wanted to go out. It's -, you don't know what the feeling is like when you, when you are stuck inside and, and feel no, I, I, I am so unhappy I want to go out into the fresh air. Er, but it is so dangerous.

11:17:48:22

Interviewer

So even after liberation the danger was still really quite intense?

11:17:53:31

Judit Brody

Oh, oh yes, oh yes. And, and, and actually we did go out, the, the family. What happened was -, and that is also I describe in my, one of my short stories that, um, that must have been the very end of January. Um, because you had to go out to, to get some food and, and, whatnot. And, um, um, we, our family, the four of us, we were walking. And then there were two Russian soldiers, and, er, they said, come in here. Well, if the Russian soldier says, come here, er, you go. And it was a, it was an abandoned, um, shop. Er, you know, it's, er, was just an open place, um, in a, in a building. And, um, they started to -, I think, first my father, his, his pen. And, er, they wa-, they wanted his pen. And my father of course gave it to them. I mean, you had to give what, what, er, um, they ask for. And, um, then they st-, I mean, I was only eleven but my, my sister was fourteen. So, they started kind of, er, on her breasts and everything. And then my father took my, took our hand and, and said, out. And ran out and we had to run with him, because he was holding our hands. Well, they could have shot us, but we went round the corner, and that was it. I think, I think that was terribly brave of him. I'm, I'm not sure I could do that. But that, you know, when, when they started, kind of, fingering my, er, his, his daughter one of his daughters - he thought, well that's it, I, I'll teach us to-, quick. He shouted, "Out, ran out."

11:20:11:16

Interviewer

He made a calculated decision, didn't he?

11:20:14:23

Judit Brody

I, I don't think it was calculated.

11:20:17:02

Interviewer

Really? Just a gut -

11:20:18:17

Judit Brody



I think it was just -

11:20:20:12

Interviewer

And you, did you -, is this when you went back to your flat? Or you tried to at least.

11:20:24:15

Judit Brody

Well, um, well later on, well we -, we stayed in the Swedish-protected building for a while. And then, I don't exactly know, that was, that was, er, it must have been middle of February, I don't know exactly when. Um, well they walked back to the, to the flat and they saw that, um, the h-, the, the building wasn't completely demolished, but the staircase was completely ruined, it was it was, fall, fell down. And also our apartment, er, had a, a some kind of a, a, from, from the outside. One of, one of the outside, er, walls was completely demolished. So, our flat wasn't liveable at all. But, um, one floor down there was the editorial offices of the *Radio Times*. Because I told you that the whole building was really a kind of e-, editorial offices, publisher, printer etc. So, that, that was still okay. And there was, there was a bathroom there, I suppose, for the offices. So, and so we moved in to one of the, one of the rooms of the, er, editorial offices, and other people moved into other rooms so there were, I think, four or five families living there. And, um, er, that's where we stayed for a while - I don't exactly remember how long. And, um, my grandmother, she was living in the cashier's place, which was a, a glass [Laughs] cage in the middle of it. But she had her own, er, bed there.

[Cut for card change]

11:22:36:16

Interviewer

Um, life was slowly returning to some kind of normality and education has always been very important to you – personally - but also your parents and they were keen for you to go back to school.

11:22:48:08

Judit Brody

Well, education is always very important for Jews and although my parents were not um, religious at all - they were very much atheistic - but um, this has nothing to do with religion. This is, this is customs, this is how, how uh, people have, people have in the family um, values really basically. So education has always been very important and um, I think we were fairly bright um, in those days when we were young [Laughs] and especially because I was, I was much of, much of a tomboy. I did really horrible things um, thinking back now in retrospect um, which made my, my parents' hair stand on end when they, when they knew about it. Uh, but we were really quite free. Much freer than our children are nowadays. Um, so anyway, so they, they really wanted me to go back to school as soon as school opened, but um, I, I went to the Lutheran School and that wasn't open, so they sent me to the, to a, to a school - just a, an ordinary uh, school by uh, um - the, the city and, and I, I really disliked it and, of course um, all the, all the children went through, uh, terrible experiences. Uh, not only the Jewish children but uh, the, the gentile ones as well. So, uh, it wasn't a very pleasant place. But then as soon as the um, Lutheran School



opened uh, I was sent there. Um, however, this was quite a bit later. I, I should say it was in uh, 19-, of course, January 1945 and maybe... yes, in the, in the winter of '45, '46. It was early 1946 um that we heard that one of the teachers who um, everybody loved her really, children had a crush on her - the girls -um, and she went to the West uh, now she was a West-goer, that's the best I can translate it into English uh, which meant that she tried to escape from the Russians going with the Germans, so her heart was with the Ger-, with the Germans, but later on we heard, of course, she had a, a boyfriend who was in the army and she went uh, accompany, accompany the army towards the West but when she came back in 1946 um, and she was again started teaching uh, I thought that was terrible. I'm not going to sit in a class and, uh, where she, she's teaching me, so I started collecting signatures that we don't want her and then the headmaster called me in because I was the originator of it and he called me in and, and he, she, he called some of the others in and um, I... she, he tried to persuade us to withdraw our petition and all the other withdrew their petition except me. [Laughs] So I had to change schools and, um, so I changed schools, but the whole thing wasn't quite as clean as it could be because some of my good friends were already attending that school. Because, in the meantime, I joined a scout troop and that scout troop was, which was originally a Jewish scout troop um, but by, by that time, by -, after the Liberation it was open to everybody and was not maintained by the, by the uh, Jewish money um, but it was, it belonged to the uh, scouting federation uh, and so I made um, friends there and they attended that school, so it was a good thing for me to go to that school. [Laughs]

11:28:05:06

Interviewer

I mean, it's very interesting that you've in your career become a teacher, so education, as you said, it's, it's been part of your value system from very early on.

11:28:15:06

Judit Brody

Well, I um, I only became a teacher because, um, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do and I knew I wanted to do something in uh, natural sciences but I, I, I wasn't all that sure what. So I didn't, I didn't want to opt for physics or mathematics. I certainly didn't want to do chemistry, because my father was a chemical engineer and my sister, she went to a, a, a chemical middle school so she wanted to be a, a chemical engineer and so I didn't. I wasn't interested, interested in chemistry because of that. I'm more, more in physics. But I wasn't all that good in either, so there was an, an opportunity to go, do mathematics, to do mathematics and physics or physics and mathematics and, and within the teacher training shall do three years of subjects and one year how to teach. So I opted for physics and mathematics and the teacher training. So I had to be a teacher because I couldn't think of anything else. But I was never a good teacher.

11:29:41:20

Interviewer

I'm not sure that's right. I'm sure you're a wonderful teacher. So Judit we're, we're approaching the end of the interview um,

[Cut for direction]



Um, but before we end, can you just tell me a little bit about, um, moving to England. You, you had been married before you moved to England didn't you, to Thomas in 1955?

11:29:58:22

Judit Brody

Yes, we got married in August 1955 and we had our own apartment which mostly my children, my, my, my parents provided and um, he, he, he'd just finished his PhD in mathematics and I was teaching and so he was, he was also like a lec-, lecturer. Um, and then came the Revolution and uh, there was a lot of-, I don't want to go into this because all, all, all the talks and talking to people, meeting friends, what our, what our friends are going to do, it was, you know, there was a curfew. I went, I went out, I went out in the middle of the curfew to make phone calls because we didn't have a telephone. We didn't, we didn't have a telephone. Didn't, we didn't have a TV. We didn't have a radio. Actually, a TV, nobody a TV. Um, and, um, so in the end um, we decided to go and, of course, my parents were, were for it. Uh, they -, I mean, I was then, by then their only child and they, they, they wanted us to go once, I mean once, once -

11:31:22:12

Interviewer *[interrupting interviewee]*

It was a new start, wasn't it? You could have a new start in England?

11:31:26:17

Judit Brody

Well, they didn't know where we were going to go, but to leave Hungary that, that, that's what it was, um, and um, then we had another couple stay in our, in our apartment the last night and we had breakfast and we left everything behind. I, I'm not going to do any washing up. Why should I? And, um, just the two of us-, they, they went later, but we all left our apartment. We went to Calais, which was very, very much in the news not long ago with all the refugees. Um, but then uh, it was fairly quiet and um, um, my, my husband had a letter from his boss that he has to do urgent mathematical work in a sugar factory. Now why a sugar factory, because a cousin of mine worked in, in a sugar uh, industry and she had some, she knew some people then and she was coming with us, so we were, we were coming, we were going with her basically and um, to the sugar factory and so she had to do some, he had to do some urgent mathematical work in the sugar factory. We got on, on the train and we went, got in our compartment and there we found a friend of ours with his, with his brother, so we said, "Well, what are you doing? Where are you going?" Oh - he was a physicist - oh, okay and he, and he said "Well, I have to repair an X, X-Ray machine" and, and named a town close to the border. So, of course, we all knew what we, what we are up to.

11:33:19:07

Interviewer

Everybody knew, yes. Okay, that's amazing. But um, yeah, we're kind of approaching the end of the interview. Um, I just wondered if there was any major part of your testimony that you felt that you prepared for that you haven't been able to deliver. Anything that you wanted to say about your experiences that you haven't yet had a chance to say?



11:33:45:20

Judit Brody

No I don't think I have anything, uh, anything. I think, uh, I'm just an ordinary person and my experiences are just ordinary experiences and uh, it's, it's a good, it's a good thing for, for people to know. Even the people who, who are working here doing the filming uh, what happened. But, of course, you know, you have plenty, plenty of experience of other people's experiences.

11:34:21:07

Interviewer

Well, we've all learned a huge amount through this process. It's been a, it's been a very long and, and educational journey for all of us.

11:34:27:08

Judit Brody [*talking over each other*]

Learning process. It's a learning process.

11:34:29:11

Interviewer

Yes, it really is. And by speaking to so many different people we've been able to build up a very clear picture of the time and, and the impact that it had on so many different lives and your contribution is very important to us, so we thank you very much indeed for it.

11:34:45:09

Judit Brody

Thank you, thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

ARTEFACT 1: scan of a photograph of Zsigmond Brody, Judit's paternal great uncle

11:34:49:07

Judit Brody:

[...]my paternal great uncle in his older time and he's the one who started out like just a very, very poor guy [...] a publican's son, and made a lot of money, uh, with journalism and printing and he had his brothers educated, so my grandfather was educated on his money. Uh, he was a younger brother and so my grandfather became a solicitor. His name [...] was [...] Zsigmond Brody and he, he, when his wife died he also gave money for a children's hospital in his wife's name: Adele Brody [...] So there is a Brody Hospital in Budapest [...] which [...] he established. He gave the money for it.

ARTEFACT 2: scan of a photograph of her parents on honeymoon

11:35:54:10

Judit Brody

Well, this is a picture of my parents on their honeymoon. [...] It is probably in Switzerland. It doesn't say on the back. It just gives the date, so it was the honeymoon.



ARTEFACT 3: scan of a photograph of Judit's mother in the early 1930s.

11:36:11:22

Judit Brody

This is my mother. It must have been [...] early '30s and this is a dress she knitted herself, because she was a great knitter, knitting everything.

ARTEFACT 4: scan of Judit, her sister Livia, and their mother Irma

11:36:24:04

Judit Brody o/o/v

That's lovely. this is some official identity picture of my mother and us two children. So that's me and that's my sister and that was in 1931.

Judit Brody iv

It can't be 1931 because I was born, I was born in '33, so it's got the wrong date.

Judith o/o/v

This is identity where she lives. Since she lived there, not since 1931, so I don't know when it was taken.

15:47:23:24

Judit Brody i/v

I had long sessions with the Fraulein to make, you know, like Shirley Temple.

Judith o/o/v

So I don't know when it was taken. I suppose I was three here. Something like that.

ARTEFACT 5: the apartment block in Budapest where Judit lived, c. 1933

11:37:16:21

Judit Brody

Okay so [...] that's the starred building. As you can see, it's very big [...] and we lived here then [...] we couldn't go back there was a big hole here [...] after the siege.

ARTEFACT 6: scan of a photograph of Judit's father Gyorgy Brody

Judit Brody o/o/v

11:37:31:11

Well, this is a [...] picture of, of my father [...] It must have been the early '40s [...] it's quite interesting because he has a striped shirt on [...] and a tie [...] with dots, polka dots or something, but you can see his handkerchief and until 1944 when all these things happened, he always had a handkerchief in his pocket, and even after. Once things settled down, he always had a [...] handkerchief in his pocket and a hat, a proper hat, and when you met him he would always raise the hat.

ARTEFACTS 7 & 8: Judith hiding in Debrecen as 'Edith Varga'

11:38:14:00

Judit Brody

this is me in hiding. Uh, I am 'Edith' here. 'Edith Varga' and not Judit Brody, and this is the guy who probably [*laughs*] was too friendly with my uh, [...] guardian and [...] that's one of the reasons [...] I had to come back. But I had a wonderful time. I was 11 years old. That was 1944.

ARTEFACTS 9 & 10: Judith hiding in Debrecen as 'Edith Varga'

11:38:46:04

Judit Brody



this is another photograph of the same time and I'm wearing [...] the soldier's hat. that's again [...] where I'm hiding [...] under another name and pretend to be a gentile. That was in Debrecen [...] I have no idea how long I was hiding for. Months, I think probably [...] I enjoyed every minute of it.

ARTEFACTS 11 & 12: scans of letters from Debrecen

11:39:14:20

Judit Brody o/o/v

So this is from Debrecen, 1944. Seven, that is July 11/ and that is July 14. This is the letter my guardian wrote to the solicitor who arranged it and he was supposed to be my godfather and she tells him about me. And this is what I wrote to my godfather and there isn't much in it. [*Laughs*] It says that there is a lot of fruit on the, on the trees and I eat a lot, especially apricots and there is a lovely little cat and two pigs. We are very well [...] and it was mailed to the solicitor, the gentile solicitor who lived next to us and who stayed in the starred building and who arranged this all [...] He would receive the letters and he would tell my parents that I am okay.

Judit Brody i/v

although I deposited a lot of uh, stuff in the Wiener Library, obviously I took a copy of this and didn't, don't, didn't deposit the original.

Judit o/o/v

In this letter I say that it's been raining for three days and the mud is so big that my shoes weigh ten kilos. And then kisses, kisses to, to the cats, which meant [...] my family.

ARTEFACTS 13 & 14

11:41:12:02

Judit o/o/v

So, this is my sister's Schutz Pass/and this one is my mother's.

Judith iv

I don't know why I haven't got mine [*Laughs*] [...]

Judit o/o/v

it's a collective passport.[...]

Judith iv

I don't think I ever had to show it to anybody but, of course, in order to move into the Swedish protected building and stay there, you had to have a Schutz Pass./And in actual fact, we also had a raid in the Swedish protected building [...]

Judit Brody iv

When people came in and "Is there anybody who doesn't have a Schutz Pass?" And my father, who was the Kommandant, said "No, no, no, no" and he knew there were hundreds, hundreds, but he was very lucky and they just found people who did have them and other, the others stayed, hid themselves. In fact, some people went up into the loft and pretended to be dead. Those who didn't have the Schutz Pass.

ARTEFACT 15: scan of a photocopy of an original document from Wallenberg donated by Judit to the Wiener Library

11:42:18:20

Judit Brody o/o/v

this one [...] the original is in the Wiener Library [... this says that the [...] Swedish [...] Embassy [...] attests that the [...] the passport [...] in Brody Judit's possession

[...] is a valid passport and here is Wallenberg's signature and the stamp [...]

ARTEFACT 16: scan of a photocopy of an original document from Wallenberg donated by Judit to the Wiener Library

11:42:44:20

Judit Brody o/o/v

And this one, [...] is an official letter - again from Wallenberg - but here, here his signature is a little different [...], because this is in October but this is in December. So even his signature changed, all the things that happened; and this names him to [...] the person who, I call it a Kommandant [...] who's in charge of the building [...] Life and death was in his hands [...] So even then when, you know, the siege was raging [...] he had to have a, an official letter that he's in charge.

ARTEFACT 17: scan of a photo of Judit's sister wearing a yellow star

11:43:33:15

Judit Brody

this is the picture of my sister - Livia Agnes Daisy [...] and especially I have this picture because [...] she has the yellow star on [...] She died in 1947, three years later.

ARTEFACT 18: scan of a photo of Judit's parents

11:43:49:15

Judit Brody o/o/v

Well, This is a picture of my parents and I think this has been taken after 1944. Uh, I don't exactly know

Judit Brody iv

but oh, oh, 1953. So that was still in Hungary, because they left Hungary in '57. They went to Switzerland.

Judit Brody o/o/v

So it's 1953, so my father is 59 and my mother is 50.

ARTEFACT 19: scan of the cover of Judit Brody's book of short stories

11:44:23:02

Judit Brody

this statue was made [...] and was set up [...] in one of the parks [...] in Budapest, but before it was [...] unveiled it was removed overnight and disappeared and then sometime later it turned up outside a pharmaceutical company [...] '49. That's, that's Communism [...] and then a replica was put up in 1999, that means after [...] the fall of the Communism. [...] this is supposed to commemorate Wallenberg and this little booklet uh, most of the stories are from that [...] time 1944 and [...] the beginning of '45 and I wrote them very, very quickly for the 100th anniversary of [...] Wallenberg's [...] birth, since nobody knows when he died [...] and there was an exhibition in the Wiener Library.

ARTEFACT 20: scan of another letter written by an adult from Debrecen

No commentary

Caption:

HOW JUDIT AND HER FAMILY



REMEMBER SWEDEN AT CHRISTMAS

16:01:40:15

Judit Brody iv

in 1944 at Christmas we were in the Swedish protected building and the siege was raging uh, in Budapest. Budapest was uh, besieged. And we celebrated Christmas in the Jewish whatever and, and um, my mother's idea was that we children, we should make Swedish flags and put on the Christmas tree because we didn't have any decorations. I don't know where my father got the tree from, but he magicked a little tree somehow from outside and, and um, we children we put the... made these Swedish flags and then in 1957, when my parents left Hungary, well until, until they... wait a minute. Yes, in 1957, um, when they left Hungary they brought a couple of those Swedish flags with them and they gave them to me and I always put them on the tree and then when my children established their own homes, I gave one to each. So my son has one in Abingdon and they put it on the tree and there is a picture here.

Judit Brody o/o/v

Here, this is the Swedish flag.

Judit Brody iv

And there is a picture here on

Judith o/o/v

their, on their Christmas tree.

Judit Brody iv

I always put Swedish flags up at Christmastime and my daughter has a Menorah, but she does put the Swedish flag up. And that's what... my son's Swedish flag was exhibited in Wiener Library in, in uh, 2012 at the 100th anniversary of Wallenberg's birth, birth uh, because I managed to give it to them. I never managed to get there, because I was going, I was taking about 50 of these, which I published with the help of my son, and I wanted to spend a night in London and I had a fall and broke my ankle. But I managed to get

Judit Brody o/o/v

these little booklets to the Wiener Library for the [...] opening of the exhibition.