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Judith Szentivanyi and Edward Saint-Ivan oral history interview by Carolyn Ellis, March 11, 2010

Judith Szentivanyi (Interviewee)

Carolyn Ellis (Interviewer)

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[Transcriber's note: The interviewee requests three times that something not be included in the transcript; given the lack of specificity of the comment, the interviewer and the interviewee later agreed that the comment would not be redacted.]

Carolyn Ellis: Today is March 11, 2010. We are interviewing Judith Szasz Szentivanyi, who is a survivor. I am the interviewer; my name is Carolyn Ellis. We are in Lutz, Florida, in the United States. We are using English as our language, and the videographers are Jane Duncan and Nafa Fa'ologo.

Uh, Judith, I was wondering if you could start by just telling us your complete name and then spelling it for us.

Judith Szentivanyi: Judith, J-u-d-i-t-h, Szentivanyi, S-z-e-n-t-i-v-a-n-y-i, born Szasz, S-z-a-s-z.

CE: Okay, and are there any other names that you have gone by?

JS: No.

CE: No. Okay. Any nicknames?

JS: No.

CE: No.

JS: In Hungary there was no H after the Judit, so Judith was Judit.

CE: Okay, so it was J-u-d-i-t.

JS: T. Yes.

CE: Okay, and could you tell us your date of birth?

JS: April 4, 1928.

CE: Okay, and your age now?

JS: It will be, on the fourth of April, eighty-two.

CE: Eighty-two. Okay, and then the city and country where you were born.

JS: I was born in Miskolc, M-i-s-k-o-l-c, Hungary, H-u-n-g-a-r-y.

CE: Okay, thank you. Let's start—so in Hungary when you were born, and when you were a little girl, can you tell us a little bit about your life there?

JS: My mother, who was a very good woman, was very ill with puerperal sepsis when I was born, and people were praying for her recovery in churches and in temples. She recovered, but sixteen years later she was killed in the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau. I had a very good childhood. My father was a dentist, he provided very well for us. I went to a Protestant high school because there was no Jewish high school in Miskolc. We were raised very religious and also very patriotic. The school was very strict; even to movies we could not go without permission of the teachers. My father—and also my uncle—were fighting in the First World War, and I had an uncle who gave his life during the First World War. Everything seemed to be all right, although there was some anti-Semitism in Hungary. Still, our life was very pleasant until the Second World War started.

CE: Okay. Now, let's go back and tell me a little bit about the neighborhood in—you grew up. Was your—your city, was it a big city, or a small town?

JS: Today, Miskolc is regarded as the second largest city—that time, I think it had 60,000 population. But there was theatre there, there was orchestra there, and culturally it was a very valuable city.

CE: Okay, and what about your neighborhood?

JS: My neighborhood was a busy city with streetcars and (inaudible) buses. We did not have a car; there was no need for any car. And despite that my father was doing very well financially, we did not need—we had no need for a car.

CE: Okay. Were there other Jews in your neighborhood?

JS: Yes. There were Jews in Miskolc, and in my school, which was—as I told you—a Protestant high school, there were five of us Jewish.

CE: There were five?

JS: Five, and the rest was not Jewish. Everybody was very friendly with us, but we were never invited to their parties and we did not invite them to our parties.

CE: So you stayed fairly separate?

JS: Fairly separate. There were children, also, who were converted Jews, and they strived to be with the non-Jewish people.

CE: So they were converted to—?

JS: From Jewish—

CE: From Jewish to Protestant—

JS: Judaism to—yeah.

CE: And you said they tried to—

JS: They tried to be with the non-Jewish—

CE: With the non-Jewish people.

JS: But at the end, their—they ended up the same way.

CE: Okay, so—okay. And did you feel anti-Semitism in school?

JS: No.

CE: No. Not at all.

JS: Definitely not. Never. No.

CE: And not in your neighborhood?

JS: Well, you know, I was a child—did not realize that there was anti-Semitism although, as I understand, there was.

CE: Okay.

JS: Because in the universities there was so-called *numerus clausus*, which means that only a certain amount of Jews could be admitted in universities.

CE: Okay, and what's that phrase you use?

JS: They called the *numerus clausus*, this is allotting—

CE: Okay, okay. Were you close to your parents?

JS: Very close, yes. My mother was a very good woman; she was, in every respect, a very good person.

CE: And did you have siblings?

JS: Yes, I had a small sibling. She was ten years younger than I was, because they could not decide to have another child because my mother was so sick when I was born.

CE: And were you and your sister close?

JS: Yeah. Well, she was a small child—

CE: I know, okay.

JS: I was sixteen when she was six.

CE: Yes, and so, you were in 1939 you were like ten years old, right?

JS: Yes.

CE: When all this was happening.

JS: When she was born.

CE: Okay, and your father—

JS: Oh, no, I was much more when this all happened.

CE: Yes. But when she was born, you were—

JS: When she was born I was, yes.

CE: Okay. So how old were you when things started to change?

JS: In 1939, I was eleven years old. In 1939 the Second World War started.

CE: Eleven years old, okay. So what is the first thing that you recall that made you aware that something was changing?

JS: Well, the first thing that happened that they called a man up, they stripped him from the ranks what they got in the First World War, and they attached them to the army because Hungary was fighting with the Germans, and then put them into forced labor camps. Everybody who could walk, as man, was taken to the forced labor camps and many of them have to pick mines—mines—

CE: Mines?

JS: Those who have to pick mines did not come home.

CE: So when you say pick mines, what do you mean, exactly?

JS: They had to go to the fields and pick up the mines.

CE: Okay, that were lying there?

JS: Lying on the fields. And those who were unfortunate to be in those camps, they died.

CE: They got—

JS: Two of my uncles died in this.

CE: Died.

JS: But those who were in other camps, many of them survived. My father survived, who was a dentist in the camps and took care of the teeth of the other people who were in the camps.

CE: So at what point did this affect your family?

JS: My father was taken away and we were left without income.

CE: Okay, and as I recall that was later—it didn't happen right away that your father was taken.

JS: It happened several times. Several times he came home and was taken away, and then he came home and he was taken away. And at the time we were taken away, he was away.

CE: He was away.

JS: He was not home.

CE: And do you know which camps he went to or where he was?

JS: No, we knew that he was in Ukraine somewhere.

CE: Ukraine.

JS: And one day when he came home, he told us that there was a Jewish family they tried support and they tried to give them food, and one day they disappeared. So we should have realized that something very bad is going on in Ukraine, which is very close to Hungary.

CE: So what was life—how many years was it—how many months was he leaving and coming back, leaving and coming back?

JS: Well, I cannot tell you, but I know that between 1939 and 1944 this happened many times.

CE: Many times.

JS: And he tried to arrange with somebody in our house to provide us a hiding place, but at the last minute he said he's not going to do it. And he also sent away my little sister to somebody and he sent away me to somebody—

CE: Oh, really?

JS: —but I came back. Yes.

CE: Okay, and who did you go to?

JS: A friend of his, who was not Jewish, to another city.

CE: To another city.

JS: But I came back and the little sister was brought home.

CE: So everybody came back together.

JS: Yeah, everybody came back together.

CE: And how were you supporting—how was your mother supporting the family?

JS: Well, originally my mother was a well-do woman, and—

CE: What do you mean?

JS: Originally my mother had—was a well-do woman, so we got well—

CE: Well-do woman—

JS: Got—well, we just lived off what we had.

CE: Okay.

JS: And we had an uncle who was still at home; he was not taken to the labor camp because he was sick. He had a little restaurant and a little cafeteria, I would say, and we were eating by him.

CE: Okay, okay. So, what happened then? What was the next thing?

JS: Well, gradually the times got worse and worse—

CE: Yeah, were you still going to school then?

JS: I was, yes. Until last minute I was going to school.

CE: Okay, and were you being treated any differently?

JS: No.

CE: No? Still not?

JS: No, at the school I was treated well.

CE: Okay. How about in the community? Were there things you couldn't do at that

point?

JS: Well, gradually things got worse, we had to get yellow—where after—until the Germans didn't come to Hungary—things just got worse, but nothing happened. But in March 1944—

CE: Okay.

JS: The Germans came to Hungary and occupied Hungary, and this is a very surprising thing because Hungary was fighting with the Germans. But anyway, they occupied Hungary, and this was the time that things really got worse for the Jews. And this is when we have to put on the yellow stars, and also this is when things had got really very bad. We could not go to public places and people who were very friendly to us before turned their hats when they saw us, and things got very dangerous. Now, most people were taken to the ghettos, but not us. And why not us? That I still don't understand, but their explanation was that people who were physicians' families were not taken to the ghettos, and their explanation was physicians are very badly needed in the war and this is why they are leaving the physicians' families. But one day they came for us, and they were taking us on the streets of Miskolc to the brick factory.

CE: Okay, okay. Stop there for just one second and just tell me—can you tell me about that day that they came to get you, what that was like? Do you remember details?

JS: It was already June 1944 or end of May 1944, I don't know for sure.

CE: Okay, and did they come into your house?

JS: Yes.

CE: Okay, can you tell me about that?

JS: I don't know.

CE: You don't remember the details?

JS: No.

CE: Do you remember them coming into your house?

JS: No.

CE: No? So you—

JS: I don't remember at all. About that—all that I remember was we went on the street to this brick factory, and people were standing on two sides of the streets and they were laughing and applauding and spitting on us.

CE: Okay, this was—was this still in your town?

JS: Yes.

CE: Yes, okay, okay. So they were laughing and spitting at you.

JS: Yes, they were. Yes. And then we arrived to the brick factory where we were real crowded—and the reason why they took us to the brick factory was because the wheels there behind the brick factory, and every day until we were dead they called us, four or five people, and the reason for that was that they wanted to find out where are the values [valuables] hidden.

CE: Okay, so they would call up four or five people and ask them?

JS: To find out where their values are hidden. Now, some non-Jewish people came to us before and they said, "We will hide your values." Some of them really thought that we come back and they'll give them back, and some of them thought we never will come back and so they can keep it.

CE: Oh, my.

JS: Okay, so they called on these four or five people to find out where the values are and

they beat them to death. Really.

CE: Did you see this?

JS: No, I did not, but it was known. Okay? So I was so afraid they might call my mother that I was almost relieved when they put us in the boxcar.

CE: Okay, now back into this—what did you call it? The brick factory?

JS: Brick factory.

CE: So the brick factory was a big building?

JS: No it was a brick—brick something, where we were sitting on the grounds. It was—

CE: So you just were sitting there?

JS: Sitting on the ground staring. It was a big, big (inaudible).

CE: Okay.

JS: I don't think there was a big building there. It was, you know, where they made bricks.

CE: Where they made bricks? Okay. And you were—did you have any possessions with you, at that time?

JS: Yes, at that time we took with us food and all kind of things, what we could carry.

CE: Yeah, okay. And were you there for a few days?

JS: Yes, about four or five days.

CE: Four or five days? And did they allow you to go to the bathroom and—was there a place?

JS: I don't remember.

CE: You don't remember any of that? Okay. So, but mainly you remember just being crowded in this area?

JS: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

CE: Do you remember sleeping?

JS: Well, we were sitting on the grounds there.

CE: Okay, okay.

JS: Not too much.

CE: So then—

JS: And we used that little cookies, I remember, and cakes what we took with us. We went into the boxcars, and ninety-five in our boxcar.

CE: Ninety-five in one boxcar?

JS: That's right. So we were very crowded.

CE: Could you just stand in the boxcar? Could you sit down?

JS: I think we could—very, very little sit. Yes. And it took us about four or five days or something like that until we arrived to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

CE: Okay. And was that boxcar like the boxcar—

JS: Yes.

CE: —in the museum? Or was—

JS: Yes, very similar to that. And then—

CE: Do you remember anything about that trip? Being in the boxcar? Do you have any memories of that?

JS: No, I just remember sitting there with my mother and my little sister in that car. And then we got out and they said my mother to go on one side with my little sister and me to the other side. And I asked whether I could go with them and they said—they just pushed me to the other side, and then I asked whether I could visit them and then somebody said, “Yes, they are in the H camp.” And I asked, “What is the H camp?” and they said *Himmel*.

CE: And they said—?

JS: *Himmel*, which is heaven.

CE: *Himmel*?

JS: *Himmel*, which in German—

CE: How do you spell it?

JS: *H-i-m-m-e-l*.

CE: *Himmel*, and that means—

JS: German heaven.

CE: And you knew what that meant?

JS: Oh, I spoke perfect German.

CE: Did you?

JS: Yes. Yes. But, you know, there was no time to realize anything. Pretty soon we were taken to a place where they took our hair—they shaved us completely and they took our clothing and they gave us one dress, no underwear, and they took us to a place which was called B-3.

CE: B-3?

JS: Yes. It's very interesting that there were little streets and there were barracks on both sides, and I met some people on the other side of the street from B-3 and none of them came home.

CE: None of them came home?

JS: No. On the other side, none of them. Well, we were on B-3. On B-3 there was no sleeping facility, nothing; we were sitting on the ground again. We were there—I don't know for sure, whether three days or four days, very, very slow days—when they put us back in the boxcars, and this time we went to Płaszów.

CE: Okay, now let me just ask you a few questions. When you were in B-3, you knew the people who were with you, right? The other people?

JS: Oh, yes, most of them.

CE: They were from your town.

JS: Well, sure. I will tell you about my friend who I grew up with; she was with me all the time, and I will tell you at the end when I met her again in Israel.

CE: When you met her again?

JS: Yes.

CE: So she was a good friend of yours, and she was with—

JS: She was with me all the time, yes.

CE: And she was your age?

JS: And she was since kindergarten with me, yes. And I will tell you at the end about her, because that's an interesting story.

CE: Okay. And this dress, do you remember what the dress looked like that you wore?

JS: No dress.

CE: You don't remember?

JS: No, I don't.

CE: Okay.

JS: She was with me this time, and her mother.

CE: Her mother, too?

JS: And her mother, too, and her mother was very good to me and she tried to take care of both of us. So, we were taken with the boxcar back to—near to Krakow to Płaszów. But

Płaszów was—I discovered when I was in the movie—and so *Schindler's List*, because it was about the same camp where I was. It was called Płaszów, P-l-a-s-z-o-v, -w, something like that. Płaszów.

CE: Yes, I have the spelling here.

JS: But anyway, the thing was that we never have seen Schindler and we never have seen the camp boss either. But what we had to do was to drag these big stones around, or they had hammers and we had to hammer hills.

CE: Hammer—

JS: Hills.

CE: Hills.

JS: And this guy—

CE: What do you mean by hammer?

JS: Just to hammer.

CE: Just hammer at the hills.

JS: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

CE: Okay.

JS: If we didn't do it fast enough we were beaten.

CE: And so the rocks you just carry from place to place.

JS: Yes.

CE: And then did you carry them back?

JS: Yes, yes.

CE: Yes, so it was just to make work.

JS: Just to make suffering, nothing else. And there were *kapos*. Now, there were two type of *kapos* there: one type are criminals who were in the camp, and one type were Jews, who—just to survive—came to this kind of work, and they were very bad, too.

CE: They were very bad to—

JS: Also, yes. And they were beating us and we were running or trying to hammer these hills.

CE: Did everybody work in that camp? Was everybody working?

JS: Well, in that group where I was, everybody worked, yes. Although my friend asked me that her mother for a short time was in what they call the (inaudible), which is where they put the sick people, you know? And also, I understand that when we arrived we were still in good shape. They took out some people who were not in good shape and sent them to Auschwitz—this is what I understand from the book that I read—already here.

CE: Okay.

JS: Well, anyway, I don't know how long we were there, but they dissolve the whole camp. They dissolve the camp because the Russians were coming there.

CE: Now, before you move on—let me just see if you have any other memories of that camp. What were the sleeping arrangements in that camp?

JS: They had those kind of sleeping arrangements, you know, the—

CE: Bunks?

JS: The bunks, yes, yes.

CE: But how many people were on—

JS: Five. Five on one.

CE: Five people.

JS: Yes, if somebody moved, then everybody moved.

CE: Do you remember anything—were you at work all day long?

JS: Yes.

CE: From early morning till—

JS: Yes.

CE: And what about the food? Do you remember food?

JS: Well, I don't remember exactly the food in that particular place. I will remember later on what kind of food we had, but there I don't remember the food, what we had there.

CE: Do you remember being hungry?

JS: Not yet.

CE: Not yet.

JS: Because that was in the beginning, you know; it was in the beginning, so really, it was the first weeks. Don't remember. Later on we were very hungry. Well, anyway, so they took us back to Auschwitz-Birkenau again because they dissolved the camp.

CE: Okay. Do you know why they dissolved the camp?

JS: Yes. Because they told the Russians are coming.

CE: Okay. Okay, that's right, you said that.

JS: They dissolved the camp, the whole camp, and you can see in the movie [*Schindler's List*] too that they dissolve the camp, and this time they took the mother of my friend.

Yeah, and so the two of us remained—yes. We were in Auschwitz-Birkenau this time for about three—four months, I think. We did not do any work at all in there, but we had to stand up in five in a row every day several times and they were counting us and counting us and counting us; they called that *Zahlappell* in German.

CE: Can you spell that for us?

JS: I'm not sure, because it's a German word. Zah—Z-e-h-l-a-p-p-e-l. I think. *Zahlappell*, they called it. Well, anyway, there we were standing there and they counted and counted and counted, right. Somebody didn't look well, they took it out. And this was—and it was already cold, it was October, it's already cold in Poland, and there we are still only one dress, you know?

CE: Same dress?

JS: Because when we arrive—again they undressed us and gave us one dress. We were there for a while and then they took us back to the boxcar, and this is what saved our life, that they took us to—it is really belonged later on to Czechoslovakia, but it was part of Germany that time, but it really belonged to Czechoslovakia. But I don't know how they call this part of Czechoslovakia; it's a beautiful area.

CE: Was this Parschnitz? Parschnitz?

JS: They took us to Parschnitz, yes. And that was a big building. There were already Hungarians there, and also there were Poles there, Polish people there. From there we— every day on the train, we had to go to Trautenau.

CE: Trautenau.

JS: Which they call Trutnov today. Is Czech.

CE: Which is T-r-u-t-n-o-v, right?

JE: Trutnov today, but was Trautenau.

CE: Which is T-r-a-u-t-e-n-a-u.

JS: Yes. There was a factory there what called AEG, or A-E-G.

CE: Right, which is the General Electricity company. That's what I—

JS: Today it is, but that time it was—

CE: I have the name.

JS: —it was making parts of airplanes.

CE: Is this the name right here?

JS: AEG.

CE: I can't pronounce it.

JS: Probably—we just knew it as AEG.

CE: AEG.

JS: Yes. Yes. This is where we were working, and the work was not bad at all.

CE: What did you do there?

JS: Who knows? I don't know.

CE: Something with parts?

JS: Yeah. Well, I don't know. The work was not bad, but we were very hungry and we were very poorly dressed and it was very cold to run to the train all the time. And that time we had—

CE: So you took the train up to work.

JS: Yes.

CE: And back.

JS: And back. And we had hardly anything to eat, and you can imagine the Germans had very little to eat, so you can imagine at this point they hardly gave us anything. And you know, one day—I don't know exactly what happened, but something very bad happened with the—how they call that red vegetable?

CE: Vegetables.

JS: That red vegetable—I know it in Hungarian but don't know it in English.

CE: Is it something you eat?

JS: It's red.

CE: It's red?

JS: Yes, to eat. It's red.

CE: It's a vegetable?

JS: Red yes, and soft.

CE: Toma—not tomato.

JS: No. Red and soft.

CE: No. Red and soft?

JS: Well, anyway, we picked it up from the floor, and we were very severely punished. I still don't eat it.

CE: So it's a vegetable and it's red and it's soft?

JS: Yes, they serve it with meat sometimes.

CE: Beets? Beets?

JS: Beets? Yes.

CE: Beets. Yes. Okay.

JS: Yes.

CE: Yes, yes.

JS: I know we were very severely punished because we picked it up from the floor and ate it, and we were very severely punished, and neither my friend or me ever eat this thing. Well, anyway—

CE: So, can you recall how you were feeling all this time?

JS: Well, what you have to know is if somebody doesn't eat right, then the person gets deficient in protein, and if somebody gets deficient in protein then the person swells up. Right, like this—

CE: Yeah.

JS: And this is how people died.

CE: It is.

JS: And I had other very horrible experience when a girl raised her hand on one of the SS women and she was executed before us.

CE: You saw that?

JS: Yeah.

CE: Did they—they shot her?

JS: Yes. Yes. And her mother was there, too.

CE: Oh.

JS: Yeah. So this was a horrible thing, really, what happened. I don't know whether the mother was executed or the girl, but—

CE: One or the other was, while the other one watched.

JS: One of them was, yeah, while the other was watching, and this was a horrible thing because she raised her hand on her.

CE: Yeah. Did you see other people being killed during this time?

JS: No, I didn't.

CE: You didn't?

JS: No.

CE: Okay. But you just knew people were being killed?

JS: Oh, well, there was some foods we got occasionally, and this we got in Auschwitz and this food—one is hand-cheese.

CE: Hand-cheese?

JS: Hand-cheese very occasionally, and I think we got this hand-cheese because it has a very bad smell. I still love it. No, this hand-cheese has such a bad smell that when they give us and everybody was smelling, I think this is why they gave us.

CE: They wanted you to smell?

JS: Yeah, they wanted us. Well, I still love it, and one day when I went to the university I saw it in one of the stores this hand-cheese and I put it in my briefcase and went to the university, and I forgot I bought it and soon I see that everybody goes away from me. (laughs) And I didn't know why. The other very rare food was that round—how you call

that?

CE: Meat?

JS: Yes, a round.

CE: (inaudible)

JS: No, that round front with that type of thing.

CE: Like a French knot bologna?

JS: Bologna, yes. Very rarely—one piece. And it was said that it was made from people.

CE: From people?

JS: I don't know whether that's true or not. And when there was a holiday, then they gave us spoonful of jam.

CE: One spoonful of jam?

JS: Yes. There was—our food was of very lean soup and one piece of bread. In some cases people did exchange their piece of bread for cigarettes. And I don't think they survived that, the war thing, because of hunger.

CE: Did you get sick during this time?

JS: Yeah, I got sick. I was in a hospital before I came home, and one day all the Germans disappeared from the camp and the Russians arrived.

CE: Okay, tell me about that day. Do you remember that day?

JS: Yes, I do remember—

CE: Tell me the details of that day.

JS: Well, first of all, the funny detail was that, you know, from each group—and this is really a shame to think—one Jewish woman was elected as the boss of the others who could order around the others. She did not kill anybody or hit anybody but could order around the others. She forgot about herself, and after the Russians came and everything was over she still ordered around the others, okay? So I will tell about her a little bit later because very interesting thing appeared after that, because when we came home everybody denounced her.

CE: Everybody—

JS: Everybody denounced her.

CE: Announced?

JS: Everybody.

CE: Renounced her?

JS: Denounced her, yes.

CE: Denounced her, okay.

JS: Yeah. So anyway, (laughs) I was in the line for food and she push me out from there, okay? Well, anyway I was the only one who did not denounce her because my father became the head of the joint—

CE: Joint.

JS: Joint of the North Hungary, so I didn't not want to interfere with the rules progress because she didn't get anything because of this.

CE: Okay, so let me see if I understand. She was a—

JS: They elected somebody from the group.

CE: Okay, so she was just a person like you, a Jewish person?

JS: Like me, who could order around the others.

CE: And you elected her or the SS?

JS: No, the Germans.

CE: The Germans—

JS: Yes.

CE: —elected her.

JS: Why? We don't know, but she could—she didn't have to work, she could order around the others—

CE: Okay, so she was kind of their spy, it sounds like?

JS: That's right, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Well, anyway, interesting things happened. Well, anyway—

CE: Can you think of any other stories like that from the camps?

JS: From the camp?

CE: Mm-hm.

JS: Well, it's all sad stories, only sad stories, because under these circumstances people can get very bad.

CE: Are there any that you would want to tell, or not?

JS: I'd rather not.

CE: You'd rather not, okay.

JS: Under these circumstances even children can get bad with their mother and mothers can get bad with their children, believe me, because food was the only thing what was important for everybody. And I don't want to speak about that.

CE: Yes, I understand that. And I also understand that that could happen.

JS: It could happen, yeah.

CE: It makes sense.

JS: So, the Russians arrived, and they were good meaning Russians who thought, "These people need to be fed," so what they brought pounds and pounds of sugar and flour and meat and they just threw it there.

CE: Just threw it out into the crowd.

JS: Just in the crowd. So, who was strong enough got it; who was weak enough like me didn't get it.

CE: And you were weak because of all the weight you had lost.

JS: The weight I was, and those people who got it got very sick and some of them died

because if somebody doesn't eat for month and months and months—believe me—cannot eat pounds and pounds of sugar and flour.

CE: Did they get sick immediately or did it take a while?

JS: They got horrible diarrhea, horrible diarrhea. Believe me, they ate it so—

CE: Fast.

JS: Yeah, yeah.

CE: Did you eat any of it when they threw it in?

JS: No, I did not. I never got to eat.

CE: You didn't get to?

JS: I never got to eat, no.

CE: So, the Russians come in and throw in the food—

JS: Throw in the food.

CE: And what happens then?

JS: And then some of them, like me, they took us to a hospital. They took us to a hospital in Trautenau. I was in that hospital I don't know how long—few weeks maybe, and then they put us on a train and I got home.

CE: Okay, now what was—tell me about being in the hospital.

JS: Well, the most horrible thing about being liberated is for somebody who suddenly

realizes what happened because, until you are in the concentration camp, you don't realize what happened. Only after you are liberated—then you realize what happened.

CE: So when you're in the concentration camp—

JS: You don't care whether you live or die, so nothing makes any difference. Okay?

CE: Nothing does.

JS: Nothing, nothing.

CE: Did you have any—did any—what kept you alive, do you think?

JS: You just keep alive, and I—

CE: Did you want to be—

JS: No.

CE: You didn't care.

JS: You don't care. But you speak about food all the time, because food is the only thing that you care about.

CE: Okay, so that was all the conversation was—

JS: Food was—food is all the conversation, that's the only thing that you care about. And I would like very much if you would leave out what I told you about mothers and children, because I would not like to have that in the tape if possible.¹

CE: We can talk about that.

¹ Given the comment's lack of specificity, the interviewer and the interviewee later agreed that the comment would not be redacted.

JS: Take it out.

CE: There are no details.

JS: Yeah, I don't want it to be there. Well, anyway, food is the only thing what matters, nothing else matters. Okay?

CE: Did you talk about the people you had lost?

JS: Nothing.

CE: Relatives? None of that.

JS: You don't speak anything about anything.

CE: Just food.

JS: Only after you are liberated; then suddenly it comes to your mind that you lost everybody, and maybe you go home and you find nobody. And since I was sixteen, maybe I am not even able to support myself, because I was only in high school and I have no—I have no way to support myself, I don't know anything. So what will now happen to me? And this is the most horrible feeling that you can go through.

CE: Oh. I'm not sure I can even imagine it.

JS: Yes, and this is the only time when you realize that what happened. Until that time you don't care.

CE: So you remember being in the hospital and now all these thoughts are coming—

JS: That's right, and then the thoughts—then this is—yes, yes. Yes. And then I remember that when I came home on the train, I was even thinking about jumping out of

the train.

CE: Oh.

JS: I remember thinking, “Should I jump out?” Yes.

CE: And were you thinking about just being alone and not being able to support yourself?

JS: That’s right. I was sure I cannot support myself. That, and that—

CE: And did you think about family at that point?

JS: I was sure I had nobody.

CE: Okay.

JS: This is what I thought. Well, anyway, I arrived home, and there was my father in his office.

CE: Okay, well, I want the details. So you arrive—

JS: Well—

CE: And what happened?

JS: Well—

CE: You get off the train—

JS: Where I arrive—to Budapest, which is the capital of Hungary. And I did not even look after anybody because I was sure I had nobody. And somebody told me that, “Do you know any relatives in Budapest?” I said, “Yes, I had an aunt here, but I am sure she

is not alive.” So they said, “But why don’t you go and look her up?” So I started to walk and go and walked and walked—this was a big walk. And I arrived to her house, to her home—she had a small apartment—and she was standing in the kitchen, cooking horsemeat and she was there.

CE: You remember what she was cooking, that’s great.

JS: I always remember, she was making horse—horsemeat, because that was all that was in Hungary that time, from horsemeat hamburger. And she said, “Your father is at the railroad. He’s expecting you to get home because somebody told him that you are alive, so he’s obviously in the railroads to see when you are coming.”

CE: Wow.

JS: Yeah.

CE: So Budapest was—was that near where you grew up?

JS: About sixty miles or something like that, yeah.

CE: Sixty miles? Okay, was he living there then?

JS: No. She just came up to stay at—stay on the railroad to wait for me, because they told me I am alive.

CE: Okay, was he living with your aunt then?

JS: No.

CE: Staying with her?

JS: Oh, well, during that time, because he was staying there because somebody told me I am alive.

CE: Okay, and you were gonna—

JS: And he knew that I am the only one who is alive.

CE: Okay.

JS: Yeah. He already knew that my mother and my sister is not, but that I am alive.

CE: And this aunt—was that his sister?

JS: Yes, his sister. So, then he came home, and we started to go home to Miskolc.

CE: So when he comes home and you—he comes to the aunt's house and you're there—

JS: And funnily, that part I don't remember.

CE: You don't remember?

JS: No, no.

CE: Okay, interesting.

JS: Nope, that part I don't remember, when he came.

CE: So you don't remember actually seeing him the first moment.

JS: No, I don't remember. He writes it up in his book, but differently. But that—

CE: Okay, you told me that he had written some of the—

JS: Yes, but he wrote it down differently. Okay, anyway, he doesn't write it; he writes it down that he saw me coming on the railroad.

CE: On the train, okay.

JS: On the train.

CE: So that was the way he remembered it.

JS: This is how he remembered it, but it was not so. It was so that I went to my aunt.

CE: Okay.

JS: Now, what I don't remember—when he arrived to my aunt and so only this part I don't remember, but I remember that we went together on the train home to Miskolc.

CE: Okay.

JS: And my aunt came, too.

CE: Okay.

JS: So she stayed with us.

CE: And had she lost her whole family?

JS: Her husband was shot into the Danube [River].

CE: Okay.

JS: Because in Budapest people were shot into Danube.

CE: Okay.

JS: Yeah. So she was a widow. So, the three of us were living in Miskolc together and my father was taking care of the Joint of North Hungary.

CE: Okay, and that's Joint—that's j-o-i-n-t?

JS: J-o-i-n-t. That was a American help organization, Joint.

CE: Okay, and, uh, Joint—was that the Joint distribution committee?

JS: Yes.

CE: Okay.

JS: And he was of North Hungary, taking care of North Hungary.

CE Okay.

JS: And what was his duty? His duty was to go to the railroad and meet everybody who is going through Miskolc home and going—coming to Miskolc, and also established a hospital in Miskolc for those who came home sick.

CE: Okay.

JS: And distributed—she had a group of people who distributed clothes and caps, things like that, to those people who needed it. Now, he was very strict about it that nobody who was in the group of people who distributed or his family didn't get anything, and this woman (laughs) didn't get anything.

CE: This woman, the woman who was lost and didn't—

JS: Yes, didn't get anything. Right.

CE: (laughs) Okay.

JS: So, otherwise everybody got—got—everybody got what they needed.

CE: Okay.

JS: But I really didn't need anything because my father already—the Russians brought so much, my father had to put a golden piece into the Russians' stews because they put that (inaudible) to his food—to his head. Then he didn't learn to destroy their piece, and they wanted to have golden cups, so they brought their gold, he put on their cups, and so they brought us so much food that we had plenty.

CE: You had plenty at that point. And were you back in your old home?

JS: Yes, and everything was there.

CE: Everything was there?

JS: Everything was there because my father had such a beautiful office that the Germans used it, and so they left everything. They lived in our home, they used his office; everything was there.

CE: Ah, how wonderful.

JS: Okay, well. Oh, but I can tell you that my wedding ring [was] made out from that gold that the Russians brought.

CE: Really?

JS: Yes.

CE: Oh, wow.

JS: And so—because they're not—nothing. Nothing after the war in Hungary. The money was worthless; everything was—nothing, nothing. But we had plenty of food and we lived all right after that.

CE: Were you pretty healthy by that time?

JS: No, I was very sick, but he brought in physicians and—I was—after a year or so, I was fine.

CE: Okay.

JS: Now about my friend. My friend, she is called Chaga Weiskopf, but her name was Eva Bleszbergei in Hungary.

CE: And can you spell—it's Eva, E-v-a?

JS: Eva, Eva—

CE: And her last—

JS: E-v-a. Bleszbergei, B-l-e-s-z-b-e-r-g-e-i.

CE: Okay.

JS: But now she is Chaga Weiskopf in Israel. Well, anyway, we were small children already together, and we grew up together, and we went to Auschwitz together, and I went to Parschnitz together with her. But we stopped by another camp which was a much better camp, and I could have stayed there, but I wanted to go with her and so I got to Parschnitz.

CE: Oh, okay.

JS: Yes, and I could have—

CE: Because she had to go to the other camp, right?

JS: Yeah, she had to go to the other camp. Well, anyway, so she—after the war she went to Israel, and for ten years I go—I went to visit to Israel, and she came to the airport and we missed each other (laughs) because we didn't recognize each other!

CE: Oh, really!

JS: Yes, but later on we met and I lived with her for two weeks.

CE: For two weeks? Oh, that's wonderful.

JS: Yes, yes, yes.

CE: Is she still alive?

JS: Oh, yes, yes. She is alive and we speak every two weeks or three weeks on the phone.

CE: Oh, that's wonderful.

JS: Very nice, yeah. She is—her daughter is very sick, but she is all right. Yeah.

CE: Before we end this tape, just for a moment, could you spell her name now for me? In Israel now?

JS: Chaga, C-h-a-g-a. Chaga Weiskopf, W-e-i-s-z-k-o-p-f.

CE: Okay, and then just before we finish this tape, could you spell your father's name and then I'll get you to spell your mother's name. Your father—

JS: Yes. My—my father's name was S-z-a-s-z K-a-r-o-l-y, Karoly.

CE: Okay, and that's his first name?

JS: But since he also immigrated to England when we immigrated to America, his name was Charles (inaudible).

CE: Charles.

JS: Yes, and my mother's name was Magda, M-a-g-d-a, Rosenberg, R-o-s-e-n-b-e-r-g.

CE: Okay, thank you. So I think we'll stop right now and take a break.

JS: And I would appreciate if you take out that part, because I should not want that in it.²

CE: Okay, let's—

JS: If you can.

CE: Let's speak about that when we're off tape, okay?

JS: Okay, fine.

Part 1 ends; part 2 begins

CE: This is tape two interview with Judith Szentvanyi. So, Judith, could we start with your life in Hungary after you came back to your hometown with your father? Could you tell us a little bit more about that time?

JS: After I got back, I finished high school.

² Given the comment's lack of specificity, the interviewer and the interviewee later agreed that the comment would not be redacted.

CE: Okay.

JS: My father got married.

CE: He did?

JS: Yes, and after I finished high school, he sent me down to Szeged, S-z-e-g-e-d, where I started medical school.

CE: Oh, so you must have been a good student, right?

JS: I was a good student, yes.

CE: Okay, okay.

JS: And during the first two years, I was in medical school in Szeged, and when I went home to Miskolc, I got married in 1948 to—

CE: Okay, go ahead.

JS: Andor, A-n-d-o-r, Szentivanyi, S-z-e-n-t-i-v-a-n-y-i. And he was in medical school in Debrecen.

CE: Now how did the two of you meet?

JS: We knew each other as children.

CE: You did? You lived in the same town?

JS: Yes.

CE: And, um, could you just briefly tell us his experiences during the Holocaust?

JS: Ah. My husband was escaped from the same camp where my father was also, and everybody was killed in that camp. They both escaped from there, and it's a very long story of both of them, how they survived. My husband was walking in Budapest when he met, uh, [Raoul] Wallenberg. He saw Wallenberg as he was approaching a group of people who were taken by the SS. And he was speaking with perfect German to the SS, saying that they are all Swedish citizens, and he was passing out Swedish passports to them, and—

CE: Wallenberg was.

JS: Wallenberg. And stating that there are Swedish houses that he purchased and they belong to those houses.

CE: Oh, okay.

JS: My husband walked up to him and asked whether he could be of help to him, and he said yes, he could go to see those people who are hiding and bring them to the Swedish houses.

CE: Okay.

JS: And this is what my husband has done.

CE: Okay.

JS: Unfortunately, Wallenberg was taken by the Russians and killed. He saved, in Budapest, several thousand Jews. And he's still a very big hero and my husband was talking about him a great deal.

CE: Okay.

JS: I was married to Andor Szentivanyi for fifty-seven years. He passed away in 2005.

He was the dean of the medical school USF in the 1980s. He was—first we started out in Chicago—

CE: Now, how did you—so you married him in—

JS: I married him in 1948.

CE: In Hungary.

JS: In Hungary.

CE: Yeah.

JS: We escaped from—during the Hungarian revolution in 1956, we (inaudible) from Hungary—

CE: Oh, okay.

JS: And left everything behind us, and only if somebody goes through what I went through is able to leave everything behind her, is able to walk out, leave out with my six-year-old son through forest through Austria.

CE: Wow.

JS: And we arrived to Austria and contacted my uncle, who was the brother of my mother, and lived here in America.

CE: So, say that again for me?

JS: When we arrived to Austria, we arrived to Vienna—we took everything—

CE: Vienna, okay.

JS: —and I contacted my uncle who lived here in America.

CE: Okay—

JS: He was the half-brother of my mother.

CE: The half brother of your mother. Mm-hm, okay.

JS: Yes. He sent me money, and also we came then with help to—to (inaudible) first and through (inaudible) boat to New Jersey. Camp Kilmer.

CE: Camp Kilmer? K-i-l—

JS: Yeah, K-i-l-m-e-r.

CE: —e-r? Mm-hm.

JS: And through Camp Kilmer we came to Chicago, where my uncle lived.

CE: And this was you and your husband?

JS: Yes.

CE: Traveling together.

JS: And my child.

CE: And your child?

JS: Yes.

CE: Your six-year-old child.

JS: And in Chicago my husband was Rockefeller fellowship—started at University of Chicago, and I started an internship without knowing any English.

CE: Wow, so he—you just came to Chicago, you didn't know anybody but your uncle—

JS: My uncle. Yes.

CE: And then you—he was able to get this position.

JS: Well, he had Rockefeller fellowship.

CE: Okay.

JS: He had Rockefeller fellowship at University of Chicago.

CE: Wow.

JS: Yes, because by that time he was already known.

CE: Okay. Okay.

JS: Yes. And I started my internship in a very bad poor hospital close to the University of Chicago and did a rotating internship there; and meantime the chief of my husband wanted to go to Denver, Colorado, and he took my husband with him.

CE: Okay, and you went, too?

JS: And I went there, yes.

CE: To Denver? Uh-huh.

JS: And we got to Denver, which was a beautiful city at that time, and my husband worked with him and I did my further fellowship at a Jewish asthmatic children's home with Dr. Samuel Bukantz, B-u-k-a-n-t-z, and I want to tell you about him something later.

CE: Okay.

JS: And after that I did a residency at the University of Colorado in dermatology and started practicing in Aurora, A-u-r—A-u-r-a-r-a [*sic*], Aurora.

CE: Aurora.

JS: Colorado, mm-hm.

CE: Colorado. Okay.

JS: But I practice only nine months when my husband got the chairmanship in Omaha, Nebraska.

CE: Oh, my! Now, did you have your second child by then?

JS: No.

CE: No, not yet? Okay.

JS: No. We moved to Omaha, Nebraska. Yes, yes, in Denver—Denver I had my second child, yes.

CE: Okay. So you were having a child while you had this position and—

JS: Yes, yes. I had Jim in Denver, Colorado, and we moved to Omaha, Nebraska, but I didn't work in Omaha. I worked in Council Bluffs, Iowa, which is at the boarder of

Nebraska. Every day I went with a car over to Iowa and worked with a group of sixteen physicians in dermatology. I was the dermatologist and they were other specialties. I was very happy there, very good group, and anyway the (inaudible) people were good patients and nice people and I was very happy. Then a friend of his came to visit us here from Florida and said to my husband that a medical school is about to happen and would he come down here and the three of them, Dr. Smith, Dr. Fisher, and he would start a medical school here.

CE: Oh, okay.

JS: I was very upset about the situation, because in Florida you have to have new license—new examination, new license. So, I was very upset about it, and anyway I didn't like—I didn't like that at all. I came to see it because Omaha is much more beautiful, Denver is more beautiful, and anyway I had to make a new examination.

CE: Oh, so you had to—and he did, too?

JS: Starting from anatomy. Starting from anatomy. Starting from anatomy—all over.

CE: Okay. Okay.

JS: And I did pass it. I didn't pass it. So my husband said in case I cannot pass it, he's not coming.

CE: Now, he had to take a new examination, too—

JS: No, because he was not practicing, he was always in research.

CE: Okay.

JS: So, I said, "I am not going." So he said he is not going. So, I tried a second time and I passed.

CE: You passed. Did you study a whole lot for it?

JS: Yes! As you can imagine, you have to start from anatomy to physiology—everything again.

CE: Yes, yes.

JS: And in Denver I did it from basic science everything you had to do. So I had enough, and so I started to practice on Florida Avenue [Tampa, Florida] and it went all right. Until ninety-six [1996] I practiced here in Tampa—dermatology—then I got the lung cancer.

CE: You got lung cancer?

JS: Yes.

CE: Ah. Were you a smoker?

JS: Yes.

CE: You were—

JS: Forty years.

CE: Forty years?

JS: Yes, I got lung cancer, and after the lung cancer I got tuberculosis in my left foot and so I had to stop working and so that is what I am doing. I am just retired.

CE: So you've been retired since 1996?

JS: Ninety-six [1996], yes. And that was very traumatic, but I am a survivor because I survived this and I survived was something more.

CE: Yeah.

JS: And we had a very small little apartment (inaudible) Hungary: a small room and a bathroom, nothing else. And in the bathroom there was gas, gas, we think in the bathtub. And my husband was home, and I don't know why but I left the room—the door open and he just heard a funny sound—I was under the water because there was a gas poisoning, carbon monoxide poisoning, in the room and he took me out from the bathtub. So I survived three times.

CE: Yes, I think so.

JS: So, I survived lung cancer, I survived Holocaust, I survived also this bathtub. If he wouldn't be home I would have suffocated in the bathtub.

CE: Okay. Okay, wow. Wow. It's amazing.

JS: That's my story.

CE: You're like a cat with nine lives.

JS: I am like a cat with nine lives.

CE: Yeah, yeah. So you come to Florida—

JS: We came to Florida—

CE: What year was that, do you remember?

JS: We came to Florida in sixty-nine [1969]. Andor came in sixty-nine [1969] and I came in seventy [1970], because I had to sell our house in Omaha. We had a beautiful house in Omaha and it was \$33,000—the most beautiful house you can imagine—and I had difficulties to sell it. It took me a year.

CE: So, let me ask you a few more questions before your son joins us. You've been

working with the Holocaust Museum and you tell your story there?

JS: Yes. Before I was driving and I drove there and I was quite there frequently telling my story. But lately this is too long drive for me and I told them I am not driving anymore, so when they want me they send someone for me.

CE: Okay, okay. Have you always told your story? Has it been something you've told, or was there a time you didn't talk about this experience?

JS: Since, you know, there was a long time when nobody asked for my experience. In Hungary it was nothing to speak about.

CE: No one—people didn't speak about it?

JS: No.

CE: Did you feel like you couldn't speak about it?

JS: I never felt anyway—I would always speak about it if they would ask me, but nobody asked me because in Hungary there were other people who were—had this experience even worse than me. Actually, when my niece read this, she said, “This is nothing.”

CE: Nothing compared to other people's experiences?

JS: That's right.

CE: You haven't told everything, though.

JS: (laughs)

CE: So, she doesn't know—it wasn't nothing to you, right?

JS: She said nothing because what happened to her at (inaudible) she went with her

mother, she would be not alive. Where she went with her mother was boat.

CE: Oh, okay.

JS: And they went to Germany so she survived with her mother.

CE: So when did people start getting interested in hearing your story, do you think?

JS: I think I started to go to the museum to tell it about maybe ten years ago.

CE: Ten years ago?

JS: I think so. Actually, not everybody's interested in the talk, you know that. And some people deny it.

CE: Yeah. And do you—does it help you to tell your story?

JS: No. It doesn't—I can tell it without too much emotion anymore.

CE: And is that your preference, to tell it—to not get emotional?

JS: Yes. Yes. And it's a necessity.

CE: It's a necessity?

JS: Yeah.

CE: Okay, 'cause that would make you feel bad, is that right?

JS: I would me—feel me bad not to tell it.

CE: It would—say that again?

JS: I would feel bad not to tell it.

CE: You'd feel bad not to tell it.

JS: That's right.

CE: Okay.

JS: As long we can tell, we should tell. And then there are some people who went through it but not talk—cannot tell it.

CE: Cannot tell it, yeah. So, you can tell it, and that's—that's good.

JS: I know I can tell it, so I tell as long as I can.

CE: Does it both—are you—after you tell it, does it—do you then feel better or do you—does it bother you? Does it bring back the memories?

JS: No.

CE: It doesn't have any impact on you—

JS: No.

CE: —to tell it?

JS: Not anymore.

CE: Did it initially?

JS: No, I don't think so.

CE: No?

JS: I just think it's necessary to tell about it, and I do it.

CE: Okay, okay. That's wonderful. We appreciate your telling it.

JS: Thank you.

CE: Thank you. Is there anything else that you would like to say, any message that you would like to leave for the people who will be watching this?

JS: Please don't forget it.

CE: Please don't forget it, yeah.

JS: I am so afraid that it will be forgotten, because I don't think too much about the First World War. I would not expect the generations to be coming to think about the Second World War.

CE: Do you meet with other survivors?

JS: Yes. We have meetings with survivors. This is where your friend gave to—

CE: Yes, Tori?

JS: Yeah.

CE: And is that helpful to you?

JS: No.

CE: No?

JS: Because I think only they come because they need help—they are very poor people and they need help. I just go because I get invitation, (inaudible) (laughs).

CE: Just something to do?

JS: (laughs) Yeah, it's something to do.

CE: So you don't feel any special connection to other survivors?

JS: No, no. Not positive, not negative, nothing.

CE: Okay. Anything else you want to tell us?

JS: Nothing.

CE: Well, let me just ask you, before your son—and then we'll get your son to join us. Did you—are these stories that you shared with your family, with your children, or—?

JS: The children don't like to hear about it.

CE: They don't like to?

JS: No, they don't. I think they feel guilty.

CE: Why do they feel guilty?

JS: I don't know, but they don't like to hear about it.

CE: Did you and your husband talk about it?

JS: Yes. My husband was very upset until his death that he doesn't have any pictures about his parents, that they both were going—were going to the gas chamber. And he never survived it, he never survived it. He was really very sick about it; he never survived the problem.

CE: So it was always a problem for him.

JS: Yes.

CE: So you have two sons—

JS: Yes.

CE: And your older son, what is his name?

JS: Peter.

CE: Peter? And he's married?

JS: No.

CE: No? So he doesn't have any children?

JS: No.

CE: So you have no grandchildren?

JS: No.

CE: Oh. Okay, all right. And you don't have other family, right?

JS: No, I have these two children, that's all.

CE: That's it, and I—

JS: Now, my brother from the second marriage is coming next week—

CE: That's right!

JS: —to visit me from England.

CE: Yeah.

JS: Yes, with his British wife. Yes.

CE: And your—when you came to the United States, where did your father go?

JS: Well, the thing was, we wanted to bring him here, and then it came out that sometimes my father first was a physician and then he became a dentist. He cannot become a dentist here and he practices dentistry for thirty-two years. So my uncle had a friend who helped him out and he went to England. And he had to retake examination and at fifty-eight years, he started to practice dentistry in England, and he made a very good practice because many Hungarians knew him and many are in England. And now his son—my brother, who is the same age as my son, is practicing dentistry in England, and he has three children. One is a physician, one is a dentist, and one is (inaudible).

CE: Okay, okay.

JS: So the rest of the family is in England. And they are all British with British accents and my children are with American accents.

CE: Okay. Now, have you been back to Hungary?

JS: Yes, I was back several times.

CE: Several times? And what was your experience when you went back?

JS: Last time when I was there I had difficulties with transportation, because there are very fast undergrounds. The steps are very fast for me already and I had difficulties. Unless I rode the taxi I had difficulties to go from one place to another.

CE: Does it still feel like your home in any way?

JS: No, I feel like a visitor. But they know right away, although I speak Hungarian all the time because with my husband I always spoke Hungarian, yeah? They know right away that I am not living there.

CE: They do?

JS: Yes.

CE: From the accent?

JS: No, not accent, from the—from the—how it sounds. Not accent.

CE: How it sounds. The tone or—

JS: Tone, yeah. Yeah. They know right away. It's very funny because we speak Hungarian all the time. We still—as soon as you start to speak, they know you are not living there.

CE: And do you—is it your sense that there's still anti-Semitism in Hungary?

JS: In Hungary there is very bad anti-Semitism. First they hid Gypsies and they killed Gypsies in Hungary today, and then come the Jews. Obvious if the financial situation is bad, then comes the hate, and the financial situation is bad today. But also, those

immigrant Hungarians who are here are very anti-Semitic.

CE: The ones that are here?

JS: The ones who are here.

CE: The non-Jews you're talking about, the Hungarian—

JS: The Hungarian non-Jews, yeah.

CE: So it continues.

JS: Yeah, and let me tell you a very nice thing, and I would like if you not tape that.

CE: Well, why don't you hold that story and—don't forget it.

JS: (laughs) I don't forget it.

CE: Don't forget it, okay. Do you experience anti-Semitism here, now, in the United States?

JS: Not personally, but I am told that there is very significant anti-Semitism.

CE: Okay, all right. Well, let's end on a positive note.

JS: Also, among non-Jews there is anti-Semitism.

CE: Among the non-Jews.

JS: Yes.

CE: Is the anti-Semitism, okay.

JS: But not like in Hungar—I go to Hungarians because every Hungarian is anti-Semitic.

CE: Okay, but what—just people who were born in this country—

JS: (laughs) Well, you see, these are fortunate because sometimes Jewish people help the anti-Semitism. This is a very complicated thing.

CE: It is, isn't it?

JS: Some of these Hungarian ladies come out from Hungary for work. They arrive in New York, and some very religious Jews are very rich in New York, in Brooklyn, and they employ these Hungarian girls. And as I hear—I don't know whether it's true or not, but they are not handling these girls very nicely. And that leads us to anti-Semitism. Whether it is true or not, I don't know, but this is what I am told.

CE: So how—do you think you lived a happy life? Would you care to—

JS: In America?

CE: Yeah.

JS: Until my husband wasn't alive, I was happy. I'm not so happy now that I am alone, you know?

CE: That's hard, isn't it?

JS: Yeah.

CE: Yeah, yeah.

JS: I try to get myself busy with all kinds of things, but I am not so happy.

CE: Yeah, it's hard when you don't have your companion.

JS: Oh, yes, and fifty-seven years is a long time.

CE: It is a very long time.

JS: Although he was very sick for a very long time—it was time for him to go.

CE: Is there anything else you would like to tell us on this tape?

JS: No, I have absolutely nothing—

CE: So what can we learn about survival from you? I'm always interested in learning how to deal with trauma and loss and just how to be a survivor like you are.

JS: I think that's very individual how somebody can survive. I don't think—this depends on the person—some people have tendency to get melancholic or depressed—but this is very individual, you know? And some people just survive. I survived lots of things and that's how it is, you know? I know I don't have too much to go and I try to do my best—I try to enjoy myself until I am [not] alive.

CE: Okay. Well, you seem to be doing a very good job of it.

JS: Thank you.

CE: I'm very glad to have met you.

JS: Thank you.

CE: And to be part of this tape and hear your story.

JS: The sad situation is that since my husband passed away—very few people even take the phone on me.

CE: Take the phone?

JS: Take the phone—especially the USF people are not very nice to me.

CE: That's too bad. I'm sorry to hear that part.

JS: Well, this is how it is.

CE: Yes, it does work that way, doesn't it?

JS: (laughs)

CE: Well, I hope that our paths cross again.

JS: (laughs)

CE: I do.

JS: Well, this is how it is, you know.

CE: Thank you very much for sharing your story with us.

JS: Thank you.

CE: Thank you. So we can break here and then Ed, your son.

Part 1 ends; part 2 begins

CE: This is part two of tape two, interview of Judith Szentivanyi, and we now have

Edward, her son, with us. Edward would you tell us your name and spell it?

ES: It's—I anglicized it from Szentivanyi to Saint-Ivan.

CE: Okay.

ES: Saint is spelled out.

CE: And how do you spell Saint?

ES: S-a-i-n-t, with a hyphen.

CE: Okay, and Ivan is—

ES: Yeah.

CE: I-v-a-n?

ES: It's the anglicized, so it's not really changing, it's just—

CE: So it's the same name, but anglicized.

ES: That's right.

CE: Okay, and why did you do that?

ES: It's much simpler. And I wrote in a number of newspapers and I didn't want people to associate my articles with Dad, who was at that time a vice-president at USF. Even though I didn't go to USF I had articles in the *Oracle*, and so—I didn't want people to connect the two things.

CE: Okay, and could you tell us just a little bit of your history? Like what you've been

doing and—

ES: Yeah, I went to Tampa Catholic High School, and at seventeen I realized I couldn't keep up with the homework and I took the GED and went to college.

CE: Okay.

ES: I went to Saint Leo College and finished a criminology degree.

CE: Criminology. I have a sociology degree.

ES: Well, we're similar.

CE: We're cousins, yes. Yes. What year were you born?

ES: Nineteen sixty-five.

CE: Nineteen sixty-five. So you're how old right now?

ES: Uh, forty-five in four weeks.

CE: Forty-five in four weeks, okay. Now, have you always known about your parents' past?

ES: Yes. Always.

CE: So it was something that was talked about in the house?

ES: Once in a while.

CE: Once in a while?

ES: Yeah.

CE: And how did you respond to their stories?

ES: I didn't think a lot about it until I started to research Holocaust literature on my own, and that's when I started to think more about it. And I saw the movie *Fateless* and I saw the movie about Raoul Wallenberg that was a television movie and—yeah, I didn't think as much about it until I started to see other people interested in it.³

CE: And then did you have more conversations with your parents?

ES: Once in a while.

CE: Once in a while? Do you have a lot of interest in it now?

ES: Some. Some.

CE: Some.

ES: I think *Fateless* was excellent—the movie.

CE: I have not seen that.

ES: Well, it's, in my opinion, one of the greatest movies I've ever seen. I have not read the book so I cannot opionate about the book, but I've seen the movie and I was absolutely blown away. It was just brilliant.

CE: Do you think the Holocaust experiences impacted your parents' later lives?

ES: Yes. Yes.

³ *Fateless* is a film directed by Lajos Koltai in 2005, based on the semi-autobiographical novel of the same title by the Nobel Prize-winner Imre Kertész, who wrote the screenplay. The TV movie about Wallenberg is *Wallenberg: A Hero's Story*, which aired in 1985.

CE: Could you talk a little about how?

ES: Well, I think they were very disappointed that the West didn't do more, you know.

CE: Any other way? Did it impact the kinds of parents they were?

ES: No.

CE: No, you don't think so?

ES: I think the West could have done more, you know? They didn't care too much.

CE: Is there anything else you would like to say about your experiences?

ES: Beside *Fateless* and the television movie about Raoul Wallenberg, one other thing. My dad had a birthday and I had to go to Borders to find him something, and there's this series, *The American Experience*, and they did an excellent piece and it had to do with this—I forget if it's his parents, but he lived in the United States and his relatives were in France and they continuously tried to immigrate to the U.S. and the State Department continuously wouldn't let them, and finally in the end they died. And it was an excellent—my point is there has been some excellent work done in this area, excellent.

CE: So your interest seems to be more of a political nature than a personal nature.

ES: Both.

CE: Both.

ES: Dad knew Raoul Wallenberg personally.

CE: That's exciting, isn't it?

ES: And to this day, we don't know what happened. I think the final insult to his memory is that a man in Sweden did a book and accused a Hungarian Jew of betraying Wallenberg.

CE: I read about that.

ES: The final insult, you know.

CE: So what kind of work have you done since you graduated college?

ES: Work in a sense of jobs, very little. But I do a lot of short stories and—

CE: Oh, so you're a writer. I heard you say you had written for the *Oracle*.

ES: Yes.

CE: So what kind of writer are you?

ES: I wrote a collection of short fiction that was published.

CE: Oh, wonderful. I would love to see some of it.

ES: Sure. But that's the only thing I've done that's well known. Everything else—I've interviewed people in newspapers, but that was very little newspapers and very little interviews, nothing like the [*Tampa*] *Tribune*. We're talking micro-newspapers where I wrote.

CE: Would you like to be a writer? Would you like to have a profession to write?

ES: I'm working on it. (laughs)

CE: So you continue to work on that. So what do you think about your mom telling her

story? Do you—

ES: I'm very happy she told her story. I think that in the nineteen—I want to mention something—this might seem a little off subject, but—

CE: That's okay.

ES: In the 1980s Volkswagen had an excellent campaign for cars, and they would feature people like Kurt Vonnegut and Jarvik. It was really racy and I thought this is really—I gotta get a Volkswagen; this is really incredible. It didn't come out until the year 2000 that Volkswagen did not pay Holocaust reparations, and it's an outrage. Until the year 2000, they wouldn't pay Holocaust—you wouldn't think that a company like Volkswagen, which has Kurt Vonnegut and Jarvik and some of these other spokesmen and is geared towards the younger generation, that such a company could do something so outrageous, to not pay reparations until the year 2000. It's unbelievable. It really is.

CE: Do you feel any connection to Hungary?

ES: I do.

CE: You do?

ES: I do. I speak the language very well.

CE: Do you?

JS: Oh, he speaks very good—

CE: So you learned from your parents?

ES: Yeah. And that was one of the reasons why the movie *Fateless* really did appeal to me. Whereas the television movie with Wallenberg I didn't see any Hungarian dialogue, *Fateless* had some, and I could relate more to that. Because I know it well enough that I didn't have to wait for English subtitles, and so it made it more believable that you actually had Hungarian language and the Hungarian part of the Holocaust as opposed to

just the Germans.

CE: Do you think that part of the Holocaust gets neglected?

ES: It does. It does. I think a lot of Americans don't understand these things. One of my neighbors gave some pork to my mom when my father died and the neighbors said, "I didn't even think they're Jewish, because they're from Hungary." So, in other words, some people don't realize that there are Hungarian Jews. They think there's Hungarians and there's Jews, not that there's Hungarian Jews.

CE: Right.

ES: (laughs) But there were. There were.

CE: Yeah. Do you have anything you'd like to say to your mother to have on tape? No? Do you have anything you'd like to say to your son?

JS: No, nothing.

CE: Nothing. I guess you get to say—

JS: I hope one day he has a job, a good job. (laughs)

CE: (laughs) Okay, anything else the two of you would like to say? Anything you want to talk about?

ES: I would just say that the German industrial institution should be absolutely ashamed that they didn't want to pay reparations before the year 2000, that they would not pay reparations and that a company such as the Mengele Company could exist in Germany for years and years and years. You could see the name Mengele—

JS: That's the—

ES: What would Americans say if the Ted Bundy company opened up in Tampa? Bundy

Incorporated? It's an outrage that Josef Mengele lived in his own hometown under his own name after the war and that they didn't do more to bring this man to justice.

JS: That's true.

CE: So you feel the same way?

JS: Yeah.

ES: He lived a good life.

CE: Do you have any message that you would like to send to the next generation of people who might be watching this?

ES: No.

JS: No.

CE: Okay, anything else?

JS: That's it.

CE: Thank you very much for participating in this—

JS: (inaudible)

ES: My pleasure.

CE: And I'm sure your mother appreciates it.

ES: Thank you.

JS: When you get home be sure I (Hungarian).

ES: Good.

End of interview