**Kathy Hagler – Life Before The WWII**

Kathy was born in 1942, her father was taken away by the Nazis when she was just one year old. Initially, she was sent to the Munkacs Ghetto with her mother and baby sister. Kathy explains that even as a child she knew it was not a good idea to let people know she was Jewish

**KH:** Today is the 7th of October.

**INT:** With Kathy Hagler.

**INT:** OK, here we are in Inverness and you said you would talk about your life. So tell me about when and where you were born. I’m just going to let you talk and I’ll prompt you if it stops.

Your name was Hagler, that’s from your family name?

**KH:** That’s from my father, that’s all I know about him.

**INT:** Right.

**KH:** I know his name and I know his approximate age.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** I think he was eight or nine years older than my mother. So I know that my mother was born in 1914.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** That’s all. I don’t know when in 1914 or where in 1914; I don’t know anything.

**INT:** So her name was, her maiden name was your grandmother’s name wasn’t it?

**KH:** Yes.

**INT:** Right. And that was the name of the husband that had gone off, the gambler?

**KH:** Yes. I mean as far as I know he may have been still alive when I was living with my granny. I have no idea. He may have been dead.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** I don’t know, I was never told.

**INT:** Do you know what your granny’s name was?

**KH:** S-T-E-R-N. But listen, as I’ve said, my granny’s younger sister survived. Her grandson, my second cousin in Hungary with whom I have a very good relationship with even today, he never found out that he was Jewish until he was twenty years old!

**INT:** Wow. From a religious grandmother as well.

**KH:** But a totally non-religious mother.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** He was twenty years old before he found out that he came from a Jewish family.

**INT:** Wow

**KH:** I mean…so my granny and my aunt were not the only ones who kept everything a secret.

**INT:** Yeah. So presumably after the Holocaust it was just too dangerous to say anything to anybody …

**KH:** I was about fourteen years old when I sort of decided all by myself that maybe it’s not a good idea to let people know that I’m Jewish. I don’t know how I reached that conclusion because there was never any doubt about it; I always knew that I was Jewish.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** But somehow I reached the conclusion that letting people know that I’m Jewish is not a very good idea.

**Kathy Hagler – Life During The War**

**Kathy was one of the very few to have survived the Munkacs Ghetto as tragically, all the inhabitants, including her mother and baby sister were sent to Auschwitz.  She talks more about her mother in the section under Reflection.**

**KH:** I was born towards the end of 1942 in what turned out to be several countries. At that time, it was Hungary, it was in its turn Hungary then it was the Austro-Hungarian Empire, then it became the Slovakian part of Czechoslovakia, then it became Hungary again, then it was part of the Soviet Union and now it’s the Ukraine.

**INT:** Wow.

**KH:** I know, I haven’t moved around – it’s the place that moved around; the borders.

**INT:** OK so…

**KH:** But I never actually lived there, I grew up in Budapest.

**KH**. My grandmother, my mother and her sister all lived in Budapest. When my mother was nineteen years old she was very ill, typhoid/ typhus or however you want to call it, and nearly died. When she was recovering she was sent to a sanatorium in the mountains and that’s where she met my father and they got married and they lived where he was from, that area, the Carpathian Basin which kept changing borders every other…not every other century, more or less every other decade.

I had a brother who was six years older than I, and a baby sister. I never knew anybody. My father was taken to…I don’t know where but he was taken in ’43, before my sister was born; he never even knew he had another child. My mother, my brother and I were taken into the Munkacs Ghetto, the name of the place where I was born was Munkacs in Hungarian, and it’s called Mukachevo I think in Russian. I don’t know if there is another name in Ukrainian, it must be the same. It was a place with a lot of Jews. Thirty to forty percent of the population were Jewish and hardly anybody survived. Some of us survived, as far as I know only one other child actually survived.

In the early spring ’44, when my brother was eight years old, my sister was a few weeks old and I was a year and a half old I was stolen out of the Munkacs Ghetto and taken to my aunt and granny in Budapest and within a few days of that the ghetto was emptied and the whole population of the ghetto were taken to Auschwitz. Not sure if anybody from that last shipment to Auschwitz actually survived.

**INT:** Right. So what was your grandmother’s background? What do you know about that?

**KH:** Nothing really, nothing was ever told to me about anything, ever. I don’t know why things were kept a secret but everything was a secret. The only things that I do know is that she was the eldest of eight children with the youngest ten years younger and those were the only two who survived the Holocaust.

**INT:** Wow.

**KH:** My granny and her younger sister; all the other six were at some time somehow killed during the Holocaust. My granny and her younger sister were the only two who actually lived in Budapest and were the only two who survived. And my only relations are the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of my granny’s younger sister…that I know of. There might be great children…great grandchildren of the other six.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** That… I don’t know their names, I don’t know where they lived, I don’t know if they were married, I don’t know if they had children; I know nothing about them…absolutely nothing. The other thing I know about my granny which is a big, big secret that was told to me on my sixteenth birthday, is my granny was divorced. Totally unheard situation in a religious Jewish family but apparently her husband was a gambler and he gambled away two businesses. So my granny, in order to be able to finance the bringing up of her two daughters, had to divorce him. The only reason I was told this was…the way it was put to me was that I should be aware of the fact that gambling may be in my blood and I should never catch it.

**INT:** Right.

**KH:** So that was the big skeleton in the cupboard of the family. Divorce in a religious Jewish family? Unheard of. And I knew nothing else; I was never told anything, I was never taught anything. We were talking about the plaiting of the challah I could see my granny doing it every Friday morning. She never showed me how. I was never taught to cook, to bake, to clean, to sew…anything!

**INT :** But what else do you remember about Hungary? What sort of house did you live in? A big house/ flat / apartment?

**KH:** We lived in a big city. Big cities were… private houses were…I never knew anybody who lived in a private house. A tenement. Housing was very difficult in Hungary. I think it’s not as bad nowadays but it was very difficult in Hungary. We had three rooms. There was no such thing in Hungary in those days as a ‘sitting room’ and a ‘bedroom’, you just had so many rooms and every room was used for whatever purpose was necessary. So, for example in summer the three of us slept in three different rooms, in winter only one of those rooms was heated…

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** So all three of us slept in the same room. Every room had a bed, a cupboard, a wardrobe, a table. Kitchen and bathroom had their own particular designation but all other rooms were simply rooms that could be used as you like. I think it has changed now but that’s how it was in those days.

**INT:** And how did your grandmother or your aunt make a living?

**KH:** They both sewed. And I was never taught to sew… My aunt made ties, all her life she worked on making ties for men. This kind of tie and that kind of tie and occasionally a scarf and silk ties, bow ties and…that’s what she did.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** My granny, by the time I knew her she was old. Well she wasn’t that old but for me…

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** As I was a little girl, she was very old, and she didn’t have a job as such but anytime any religious Jew died my granny was notified and she sewed the shirts. I don’t know if it’s a religious thing or if it’s a Hungarian religious thing…there was a very prescribed way of what the body has to wear in order to go into the grave and my granny did that and got paid for it. And she looked after me, yes. As a matter of fact, on occasion I was sent to…my granny had asthma and occasionally it got bad and she had to be taken to hospital, and my aunt was working, so occasionally I had to be sent to an orphanage for a few days, sometimes for a few weeks. But then when my granny got better and she got home then I got home as well.

**INT:** Wow. So what memories do you have of that, of those times?

**KH:** Not a lot. I have always been very good, and still am very good, at forgetting the unpleasant things. I’m really excellent at it. What I, I had rickets when I was three four five years old; I don’t remember it but I know I had it, I don’t remember it. And I wasn’t the only one. The orphanage was not a Jewish orphanage…it was an orphanage and there were nuns…and I don’t know what the children were. Maybe some of them were Jewish, maybe some of them weren’t, I have no idea, I have no way of knowing; I was very little when that was happening. But what I do remember is other children with rickets who had it much worse than I did.

**INT:** Right.

**KH:** I recovered very well and really only my teeth were affected but I remember children whose bones were very badly affected and every time they had a knock they had a broken bone that would not heal well and I can remember little children with three elbows in an arm.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** That’s what I remember and I also remember having to fight for food. When a war is over things don’t go back to normal five minutes later.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** I was only two and a half when the Second World War was over but food was not back to normal until considerably later, years later, not even here in Britain. You still had those…rationing, you still had rationing well into the fifties!

**INT:** Yes.

**KH:** And Britain didn’t suffer to the same extent as central Europe did.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** I mean the war was not actually happening on your streets, the war was happening away from here.

**INT:** Yes.

**KH:** And still rationing didn’t stop until well into the fifties, until maybe twelve years after the war. So when a war is over it takes years, years for the situation to go back to what you would call normal, so food was scarce.

**INT:** Presumably the orphanage kids get it worse, get it the worst as well.

**KH:** I remember huge bowls of boiled tatties, which is what we got, and yoghurt with it to cool it down and to…I don’t know…it was huge bowls of boiled tatties and yoghurt…and we fought for it. Little kids, four/five/six-year-old kids.

**INT:** Wow.

**KH:** Fought for it. But then I didn’t…I only spent there a few days or maybe on occasion two three weeks.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** And other children lived there full term. Other children suffered more and other children suffered more from rickets.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** And maybe some…I don’t know if they survived. But I did.

**Kathy Hagler – Life In Budapest Post WWII**

**KH:**I grew up in Budapest with my granny and my aunt. At the age of sixteen my granny, my aunt and I were allowed to leave the country and go to Israel where I lived until I came to Scotland when I was…I think thirty-five when I arrived in Scotland.

**INT:** So tell me a bit about growing up in Budapest then?

**KH:** I don’t think there is an awful lot to tell. My granny was a very religious lady so I always knew I was Jewish, never had any doubts about that. However, I didn’t know that I didn’t have parents; I didn’t realise that I was supposed to have a father… until when I was six or seven years old in school the teacher was asking the children about their parents professions and when it was my turn she asked me what did my father do so I said I didn’t have a father. So she, she was very considerate about it… and she asked me whether my father was ill, I said no, so she asked me if my parents were divorced, which was not a run of the mill thing in those days, and I said no, so she said where is your father and I said I never had a father, not knowing that every child is supposed to have a father. So she called in, she gave me a note to take home and apparently in that note she called my mother in…who I thought was my mother (who wasn’t) into the school and she…I don’t know what they discussed but obviously she told my…who turned out to be my aunt… to tell me my background. So my aunt told me that she was my aunt, not my mother, that my granny was my granny, that my parents were dead and that was the end of the story. It was not made a big deal out of. I took her clue I suppose; I didn’t make a big deal out of it either. I always called her mum; until she died I called her mum.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** I didn’t know any men. Obviously I saw them in the street but at home I didn’t see any men, in our immediate family and friends there was one man with whom I never really had any contact. But I was quite happy as a child: I loved school, I always liked going to school, I was a curious child, wanted to learn things so I was just happy going to school and happy to sit at home and read books. Never had my nose out of a book.

**INT:** What languages did you do at school? Was there Russian as well as Hungarian?

**KH:** Yes. At the age of ten we started to do Russian then… my granny’s mother tongue was German, you remember the Austro-Hungarian Empire?

**INT:** Yeah

**KH:** All those areas that…

**INT:** So she hadn’t moved?

**KH:** Well she did move. Budapest was always the centre of Hungary but she didn’t always live there, so her mother tongue was German.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** And my aunt’s semi-mother tongue was also German.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** So any time they wanted to keep a secret from me, which was very often…you don’t tell the child anything.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** They spoke German. So I got fed up with that so when I was about twelve I had two little jobs and I didn’t spend the money on sweets or the cinema; I spent the money on learning German in secret.

**INT:** Wow.

**KH:** It didn’t take me more than six months to be able to understand them. I suppose I was very motivated to learn German. So yeah, Russian when I was ten, then German when I was twelve, then I started to learn English when I was fourteen and then of course Hebrew when I went to Israel and my mother tongue is Hungarian. I no longer…I still speak German, not very well, but I still do, if I have to I can. Obviously I speak Hebrew well and Hungarian, which is my mother tongue, but not so well. I was sixteen when I left so if I have to ask what’s for breakfast my Hungarian is excellent; if I have to discuss the political situation my Hungarian is useless.

**INT:** Yes.

**KH:** But Russian I know I don’t speak anymore. I remember little bits and pieces but I can’t say I speak Russian. You don’t use it you lose it. So I left Hungary when I was sixteen and I never had to speak Russian after that. It was a long, long time ago.

What I was taught…I was taught to read Hebrew.
**INT:** By your granny?

**KH:** By my granny yes. Not the language, she did not know the language, but she prayed every single day, three times a day, all the holidays. All the prayers were in Hebrew, written in Hebrew, so I was taught to read Hebrew. Not the meaning of the word, not the meaning of a single word, but I was taught to read.

**INT:** So was there any visible Jewish life in Budapest in the war or after it? Could you go out and have a community?

**KH:** Not that I knew. There were Synagogues, quite a few, quite a few that I was aware of. My granny went on every Saturday morning. I think sometimes she went a Friday evening as well. She took me with her on all high holidays so I was aware of the Synagogues. She knew a lot of people in those Synagogues, they said hello to her, she said hello to them. I was not introduced and they were not introduced to me so I didn’t know the people.

But the education system in Hungary is different; there is elementary school you started at the age of six and you go there for eight years so you are fourteen when you finish and then you are streamed. But I was not allowed to be streamed, I was sent to the only Jewish High School in existence in all of Hungary so there obviously I became aware that there was a Jewish community.

The other children in my class were Jewish, the teachers were Jewish but the teachings were not. It was just a totally normal high school – very, very high level, the highest possible stream as it happens. The only difference was…is that we only went to school five days a week, not six like all the other kids, and on Saturday morning we went to the school’s own little Synagogue, and you had to go.

But the only great advantage I remember of that is that it was where we met the boys, because in the school itself we were totally segregated, there was a boys’ school and a girls’ school in the same building – totally segregated. The boys were on the first floor and the girls were on the second floor and never the twain shall meet. In the breaks…one break the boys were allowed out into the yard, the other break the girls were allowed out into the yard. So the only place where we met each other was the Synagogue, where we were also segregated. The boys were sitting on the left and the girls were sitting on the right, but we saw each other.

**INT:** Wow.

**Kathy Hagler – Life In Israel**

**Kathy and her granny were allowed to leave Hungary and decided to emigrate to Israel.  Kathy wanted to remain in Hungary to finish her education but that was not possible. In the beginning, aged 16 she worked in a factory, which she hated. She moved to live on a Kibbutz, which she loved from the age of 24 and lived there for ten years.**

**INT:** So you and your grandma and your aunt all went to Israel together just before she died?

**KH:** Yes, we went in January ’59 and she died in April.

**INT:**Happy to have done the journey to the Promised Land and all that.

**KH**: Very, very happy.

**INT:** Did she feel it was, I’m just putting words into her mouth, the culmination of what she’d been living for and all that, that religiousness, did that drive her to go there? Or was it partly escaping? Was it a pull thing or a push thing? Was it getting out of Hungary or getting in to Israel?

**KH:** For my aunt it was getting out of Hungary, for my granny it was getting to the Promised Land. For me, I didn’t want to go but I didn’t have a word…I didn’t have a say in the matter.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** I did try to have a say in the matter. I wanted to finish school which would have been another year and a half. I loved school, I always loved school.

And she [her teacher] had a word with my aunt and my granny, but they said no, so I had to go [ Israel]. So that was my education interrupted and I hated it, I absolutely hated it. And of course I got to Israel and if I wanted to eat I had to work so that was the end of my education until as an adult I tried to do something about it.

**INT:** So going back to Israel, what work did you do when you had to work straight away and couldn’t go back to school? Were you living in kibbutz?

**KH:** Not then.

**INT:** Right.

**KH:** I lived not far from Tel Aviv, in a suburb, it had a different name to it but it’s really like a suburb of Tel Aviv and I got a job in cosmetic laboratory at sixteen years old and I worked there for quite a while and then I learned about philately and numismatics and I worked with stamps and coins for donkey’s years and became quite an expert, a recognised expert in the field actually. But I hated living in the city and in my twenties I went to live in a kibbutz.

**INT**: You were already an expert in your twenties? A recognised expert?

**KH:** In a particular field, just philately and numismatics: stamps and coins, that’s all.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** I always like to learn things, even today I still do.

**INT:** So did they do Ulpans and programmes for new immigrants in that/at that time?

**KH:** Yes and for a little while I was in one and learned Hebrew very quickly because it was important.

**INT:** You already could read it.

**KH:** I already could read it, yes, slowly but it was an advantage yes.

**INT:** Yes.

**KH:** My aunt could read it as well but she never actually learned to speak the language. She tried hard, she did really try her very best. Not everybody is good at learning languages, my aunt wasn’t. I was very lucky, I happened to be quite good at learning languages, so I did, and I was also young; she was in her forties and I was a sixteen-year-old, that is a big difference.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** My granny of course never did but then she only lived there for about three/four months.

**INT:** So that was…what year was it when you moved there? ’58?

**KH:**’59.

**INT:**’59 when you went to Israel. So were there a lot of other Hungarians leaving at that point?

**KH:** No, no, very few indeed, maybe three other families in the year, that’s all.

**NT:** So when you, you worked in the jobs that you said and after a bit you wanted to leave the city and move to the kibbutz, that was with your aunt?

**KH:** No.

**INT:** Oh right.

**KH:**[I was] on my own.

**KH:** No, not that easily. It was not acceptable that an unmarried girl…I was twenty-four by the time I went to the kibbutz so I was not a teenager but it was not acceptable that an unmarried young woman should leave her family and live on her own. It was not easy but I’ve done it.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** And I loved living in the kibbutz and I lived there for about ten years. In the kibbutz you do everything and anything. I like that and I loved the kibbutz and I still do to this day but I was kind of getting towards my mid-thirties and I kind of realised that I never, I never stood on my own two feet. I went from my aunt’s home to the kibbutz, and the kibbutz is also a cocoon, it takes good care of you, it’s quite wonderful. But I kind of got to the point where I had to prove to myself that I could stand on my own two feet and it was now or never. I felt it was now or never. I was getting towards my mid-thirties, I was thirty-four years old and I felt that if I didn’t do it then and there I would never do it.

**INT**: Yeah.

**KH:** And then I had to decide where to go and what to do and for all kinds of reason, climate being one of them, a major one actually, political situation at that time being another one. The Levantine life being another one.

**INT:** The what?

**KH:** Levantine, Mediterranean.

**INT:** Right.

**KH:** Nerves and shouting and…everything being on high do all the time was something I found very difficult to cope with. I still do today. I don’t go to nowadays but I still did many, many years later when I went to visit while my aunt was alive and I was living here in Scotland, I still went to visit her every year and I still found that life very difficult to cope with. Nothing wrong with it, I just don’t suit it. You know how life is and what behaviour is like.

**INT:** All outside and screaming?

**KH:** It suits lots of people; it doesn’t suit me.

**INT**: Yes.

**KH:** Yeah. Nothing can be done quietly, everything is done by shouting and screaming and what bothered me more than people were shouting and screaming all the time was that when I went there I shouted and screamed.

**INT:** And you… what work did you do in the kibbutz and then what work did you do when you first came here?

**KH:** In the kibbutz I used to work with children.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** But I also worked in the kitchen, in the pardes which is the…there is a special name for it and I forget it…it is the orchard only for citrus fruit.

**INT:** Right.

**KH:** The climate was very difficult for me. When I first got to Israel it was January and the sky was blue and the palm trees were waving in the wind and I thought ‘Wow, it’s beautiful.’ And they said to me ‘Just wait until it gets to the summer! And then the summer came and I got the shock of my life and people said ‘Don’t worry, you’ll get used to it!’. Well I never did; some people can cope with hot climates and some people can’t…well I can’t.

**KH:** In the kibbutz itself was a factory and the factory sent me, a factory for plastic things, and at one point they sent me to do, to learn about export and I did.

**Kathy Hagler – Reflection On Life**

**KH:**Hungary is a horribly anti-Semitic country, always has been, still is today.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** And today it’s getting worse and worse.

**INT:** And your second cousin carried on living in Hungary?

**KH:** Oh yes, I have four second cousins in Hungary.

**INT:** Oh right.

**KH:** My granny’s sister had two daughters as well.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** And one of them had a daughter and a son and the other one had two sons and they have their own children. But it’s one of the sons and his daughter that I have more contact with. And the granddaughter Alla is the one I have most contact with.

**INT:** And did you always know, did you know them in Hungary?

**KH:** Yes I always knew them in Hungary.

**INT:** And they didn’t know that they were Jewish even though they knew your family? Wow.

**KH:** I knew them in Hungary yes. They were all younger than me seeing as their grandmother was ten years younger than my grandmother.

I went through a course, learned about export, about exporting and that stood me well when I came here and I got a job in a factory which manufactured metal detectors and I became export manager there for a few years. In the meantime I did other things, I got myself a degree in philosophy.

**INT:** Wow.

**KH:** Open University; finally I could do what I wanted to do.

So when I did my degree here I did it in philosophy and enjoyed every single moment of it. It became my degree and my passion.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** And then in the last…maybe eighteen? Seventeen/eighteen years of my working life I worked as a journalist at the local newspaper and retired eleven years ago and I enjoy every minute of my retirement.

**INT:** What do you do with your time? Just to finish off.

**KH:** I still read a lot, I’m still a bookworm, always have been a bookworm. I still am. I play bridge and I teach bridge. I do a lot of crafting and I also teach Hebrew nowadays and just enjoy my life. Being retired is like being on holiday 24/7- it’s wonderful. It’s only a pity you can’t enjoy it when you are younger.

**INT:** Yeah. So how did the teaching Hebrew come about?

**KH:** Well, because of you I met certain people who are kind of half Jewish/semi-Jewish…happen to like Israel.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** Happen to go and visit Israel every so often and they wanted to learn Hebrew and they nagged me into it as it happens and nagged me into it is about the right way of putting it. I’m happy doing it, and still doing it.

**INT:** Yes. So do you get books from Israel or something like that?

**KH:** No, no, no; just out of my head.

OK so as it happens I taught Hebrew before because in the kibbutz for some time we used to get volunteers, mostly from Switzerland or other parts of Europe as well, and some of those occasionally wanted to learn Hebrew and I was in charge of teaching them. And occasionally we got new kibbutz members, for example we had a family from America.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** And they came without knowing Hebrew so they had to learn Hebrew as well, so somebody has to tell them to learn.

**INT:** And that’s you.

**KH:** So I did that as well.

**INT:** So you’re a craftswoman, a Hebrew teacher, a journalist, a stamp and coin person…

**KH:** Not any more. But we all do more than one thing throughout our life.

**INT:** A philosopher.

**KH:** We all do many things throughout our lives.

**INT:** Yeah. So just to finish off, what you didn’t do…perfect timing…what you didn’t do is tell me the story that you told me in the café that time, that you wrote in that thing, about the train. Would you mind just telling me that story?

**KH:** I don’t know it.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** It’s not a fact of life, it’s out of my head.

**INT:** Right.

**KH:** I know that when I was stolen out of the Munkacs Ghetto the person who had done it, who was paid by granny and my aunt to do it, but who risked his own life to do it, went back a week later and there was nobody there. So in that week of…nobody…I don’t know the date, Obviously, I was a baby.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** Nobody remembered the date but in that week of end of March/beginning of April the Munkacs Ghetto was emptied and there maybe…there were a thousand people there, all of them old people, women and children because all the fit younger men were taken beforehand. So the only people left there were the old people, the women and the children. They were put on a train to Auschwitz. I don’t know what happened on the train; it is just my imagination that is working overtime.

**INT:** Yeah.

**KH:** I was not there, nobody who was there lived to tell the tale. I think that my six week old sister Eva would have died on the train. I think that my mother could no longer breastfeed her, I think that my mother could no longer breastfeed her because my mother didn’t have anything to eat. I do know for a fact…no, not for a fact but I do know nearly for a fact that when they arrived in Auschwitz three or four days later a selection was made.

All the old people, all the mothers and their children were taken to the gas chambers immediately. All the, all the children…maybe fifteen/sixteen year olds, especially the boys, all the younger women without children may have survived for a few more weeks. They didn’t come back; that is what I do know.

I have written about that. A friend of mine who lives in London, who is ten years older than I am, was on one of those trains.

**INT:** Wow.

**KH:** And she came back. She has read what I have written and she says that what I have written was too optimistic. I have, for example, written that there was a bucket with water on the train. This friend of mine who was on one of those trains she said ‘No, there was a bucket, an empty bucket, to be used as a toilet’. There was no bucket of water. She said there was not enough room in the wagon for people to ride and to sleep overnight.

She says that people were suffocated on the train, because they were lying on each other, they were suffocating each other. So even though my idea, my imagination of how horrible it was… was not horrible enough