**Marianne Lazlo – Life Before The War**

Marianne describes her family background.

INT: Marianne?

ML: Yes?

INT: Thank you for agreeing to talk to me this afternoon. Tell me about yourself; where you were born and what life was like before the war.

ML: Well I was born in Hungary; Debrecen was the name of the city I was born in. Hungary is Eastern Europe, next to Austria. I’m telling you this because some people don’t know where Hungary is. I was born in 1931 and before the war it was pretty normal. I was born in a middle class Jewish family and we didn’t really mix much with non-Jewish people and I think I lived in a Jewish area because I went to a Jewish school, a Jewish primary school.

**Marianne Lazlo – Life During The War**

Marianne describes what happened to her and her family when the Germans invaded Hungary. She speaks about the ghettos set up in her town and her time in the local brickworks before being put into cattle wagons. She goes on to explain that she and her family were selected to work in Austria, though many others – the young, the old and the sick were sent on to Auschwitz. We hear about her experiences as a child slave labourer and the behaviour of the guards. She also tells the interviewer about the events just before liberation by the Russians

ML: And then I planned to go to the Jewish secondary school as well but meantime in 1943 the Germans came into Hungary and the political system changed completely and became national socialists. And they started to bring all sorts of unpleasant rules and regulations against the Jews and people lost their, Jewish people lost their jobs, professionals lost their jobs, they sacked them. Professors, teachers, universities…they were not allowed to go to teach and then most of the university teachers’ only chance to teach was in the Jewish secondary school. And it was lucky for the Jewish people because of that generation who left, who survived the Holocaust, have all became famous, famous professional people all over the world. But myself, it was a normal life, just a child, happy children…

But then 1944 and the regulation came that they rounded up the Jews in Hungary and then we had to, they rounded us up and put us into ghettos. They sectioned off part of the city were most, most Jewish people were living. And there was a small ghetto and a big ghetto; the small ghetto was in the smaller part of the city and the big ghetto was where the big Synagogue was.

And a few days, days not weeks, a few days after all the people from the provinces, from the villages, moved, Jewish people were moved into the ghettos, either the big ghetto or the small ghetto in the city. And after they rounded us up again from the ghettos and we had to march to the brickworks, which was outside the city, and that’s where all the Jews were staying for a few days until they put us into the cattle wagons.

And the railway was beside the, the brick factory so that was very convenient for them and they pushed us into the, into this cattle wagon and started to transport us to the extermination camp. And for about two weeks we were travelling. You couldn’t see out anywhere because, you know, the cattle wagons, you can’t really see… just a little, little hole. But as I was a child I couldn’t even reach up to the hole, to the air hole so…. While we were marching from the city to the brickwork people were, the Hungarians, people were standing at the, at the pavement just watching us as if it was a circus or something. And it was a hot, very hot May, April/May, a very hot day and we didn’t have any water or anything with us and I remember my father was asking one of the women who was standing at the pavement for some water and as she went and brought a bucket of water for us and before she managed to give it to my father her husband kicked her on her side and kicked the bucket out of her, with the water, out her hand.

So she couldn’t help us. Because that’s how the Hungarians were behaving because they were all, most of them, were fascists, you know…no, they weren’t very friendly with the Jews. And then they transported us to the extermination camp. But before the extermination camp we were selected in another town in Austria and they ordered…able-bodied people were selected to one group. The other, the other people: old people, sick people and young children, they were put back on to the cattle wagon and they went on and I suppose they were transported to Auschwitz.

And we were selected to go to work and we went to another group. And then they took us into work camp, they called them Lager, and they transported us to Vienna. And then again there was a selection and they put grown up people in, to send them to work in factories or different places and they made a children’s group as well to go to work.

And I was selected to go with the children’s group in Vienna, to go… and our job was to go out at night time, only night time when the people didn’t see us, we had to go out to sweep up the snow from the pavement or if there was an air raid the previous day we had to clear up the debris from the pavement. And…well that’s the, most of the vivid memories I have, and then I was in the…in the labour camp or slave labour/children’s group, and then we had to go to work.

INT: Marianne, can you tell me who was in the camp with you? What happened to your father and mother? And to the rest of your family?

ML: We were, we were all together, we were all selected to go out together. We went together, we never separated; the family was all together. At the camp where we were; it was… I think it was a disused school, maybe it was an old Jewish school, I don’t know because we were put in the classrooms but there was no furniture, nothing in it. Just straw on the ground, on the floor and they supplied us some grey blankets, two blankets. They put the blankets on the straw…and we were sleeping on that and all together, everybody: men, woman, children in a classroom on the floor. And then always at…we were rounded up during the night, after nightfall and went, marched out onto the street to work. And then we were working there all night and then daybreak we were marching back to the camp.

And then our leader, our leader of the group (it was my ex-German teacher), she could speak German to the guard, and she was asking the guard to be a bit more lenient for the children and then (she) he made her bring back a bucket of water and they made us to stand in a row and he picked up the bucket of water and poured it over her and then it was just…. the whole thing was to humiliate her because she was only asking to be lenient with the children. That was their system I suppose.

And then…Now what happened? You see the grown up people were sent to factories to work. I had four…three sisters, the four of us, and my older sister was old enough. And then we were sent to a, one of the German Officer’s, SS Officer’s, household to be a maid, as a maid.

And his wife was very kind and one day when we were bombed out and there was nowhere to go she asked us to go and stay with them. So we stayed with this, with this family, with the woman, the wife of this SS officer, for a few days and then one day they told us, she told us, it’d be better to go back to the camp because (his) her husband and her son is coming home on leave from the army so then she didn’t want us to be around the house. But she was very helpful, very kind. It was an Austrian lady and she didn’t want (his) didn’t want her husband to know that she was helping the Jews.

And there was an air raid I remember…

INT: Carry on, it’s fine.

ML: And then there was an air raid during the day – it was in Vienna, and it was 1944…’44/’45… beginning of ’45. And we were working together with political prisoners, grown people, and I think the…as I remember, they were Italian political prisoners and then the air raid…these people were shaking and they were very afraid but I didn’t have any fear; it was very interesting for me. I didn’t know what was going on.

I looked up at the sky, a beautiful blue sky, and lots of airplanes. It looked like hundreds and thousands of stars, silver stars, on the sky and then I was happy; I was looking up and saying ‘Have you seen this before?’ And then suddenly I had, I had a hard push. I felt a push on my back and I fell down then when I got up again I saw a big dust cloud behind me and I turned back and there was a house got a direct hit.

And that was the house where there was an air raid shelter and all the people from Vienna and even the guards as well, or they called it Kapo, who was guarding us, the German…they went in to the air raid shelter as well. And we were not allowed to go into the air raid shelter, neither were the political prisoners, these Italian grown men, and they were all shaking and very afraid. And then, since it was a direct hit, everybody (including all guards) was…was disappeared…nobody was there anymore.

And then we went back to the camp and we had, we’d been bombed out three times during/while we were in Vienna and the people were listening; they were lying down and were putting their ear on the ground and were listening to the resonance of the, the airplane, when it was an air raid.

And when… you would know when the American planes were coming or when the British, or the Russian or Soviet Army. When the Americans, they usually come during the day and the British heavy bombers came during the night and the Soviet airplane came day and night, all the time with the phosphorous bombs and when they bombed the houses – just went up on flames. And then one day all the guards disappeared and left the camp. They left the camp without any guards and that was very near the time of the liberation and we were liberated by the Red Army, by the Soviet Army in Vienna. And so….so that was my war experience during the Holocaust.

**Marianne Lazlo – Liberation**

Marianne describes the arrival of the Red Army and the flight of the German guards. She explains that her father then decided to bring the family home to Hungary. They returned, dirty and covered in fleas to find their house looted and empty. They began to rebuild their lives.

INT: Tell me about the liberation by the Red Army, what happened after the Red Army arrived?

ML: Now you see what happened, when…just before the liberation, a few days before the liberation, we were transported back by lorries to Strasshoff, which is outside Vienna; it’s another small town, and there was a concentration camp as well and we were transported back there. And that was, it was outside on the…one side of the camp was a cornfield, the other side of the camp was a pine forest and we could look out to the pines. We looked out one morning when it was the day of the liberation; we looked out and there were no guards at the gate and then we looked out to the pine forest and we saw the Germans were bending down and running, running away in the pine forest. And we looked out onto the other side of the camp, it was a cornfield, and I saw the Soviet Army came with their…how do you call it?

INT: Rifles?

ML: With the rifles, marching, the Infantry, they [the Soviet Army] were marching through and they get to the camp and they started to cut up the wires, open the wires, and they came through the camp. And the people were very happy and they went and they cuddled them and kissed them; they kissed their feet and everything. And they didn’t know what was happening to them because they never saw this, this army, the Soviet Army, they didn’t know what was going on with these people; what are they doing with them, and they were afraid and they pushed us off.

And then they went away, they went through the camp and they went to the… through the camp and to the other side to the pine forest where the German Army was but by this time the German Army was away and then they[the Soviet Army] said well we’re free, we can go wherever we want now. And of course we were starving because there were days and days where we didn’t have anything to eat and then we went out and, as children, we ran out to the pine forest and we picked up this open tin of sardines which was the, the German Army didn’t have time to finish their breakfast or something and there was still fish in the tins and that’s what we were eating, it was marvellous.

But the day [in more probability, it was the day after] before there was a big air raid and then we were asked to go into the railway station and put into the, to the station, into the wagons and there was three lines of ammunition from the German Army and they put us to the middle of the…in the cattle wagons, they put us in to there, and then all night there was a bombardment. It was just days before the actual liberation and there was a bombardment and then the two lines of train with ammunition was all bombed and but all the middle wasn’t so we just felt the detonation had just, just moved. And then, then the air raid finished, the, well the grown up people, they forced the door open and we went out and there were barrels of herring and potatoes and everything just burned on the, in the bomb, during the…?

INT: Explosion.

ML: Explosion yes. Then of course we were starving and we started to eat these phosphorous tasting baked potatoes and barrel of… you know, the…

INT: Herring.

ML: Herrings. And I remember my father brought up a blanket and put a lot of herrings in it and put it on his back and said ‘That will be some food for us for the way back home.’ We started to go back home, of course the salt herring was all stuck on his back, the hard salt. And then after…we started, we started to move back to the nearest place, the nearest station to get a train back to Hungary because my father just wanted to go back to Hungary.

And then on the station there was a lot of soldiers and a lot of people were sitting there and of course we didn’t have any chance for hygiene or anything. We still had the same clothes on what we took us from home a year before; we never had a chance to change it or wash it or anything and everybody was covered in fleas. It’s not ordinary flea like what you have in your hair but it’s flea what you have in the clothes. It’s a different type of flea. I just, I noticed soldiers were taking off their jacket and taking off their hat and they were killing them with a tool, nails, picking, picking off the flies and … not flies and killing it.

INT: Killing the fleas.

ML: Killing the fleas. And then there was not much, not much train but eventually we managed to get the train and then we went back on to Hungary and then back to our house. And then there was of course…it was all looted, there was nothing in it. There was only a big sideboard that was too heavy for them to take out the house; otherwise it was absolutely empty. So my parents started to, started life again from nothing…to build up their life.

**Marianne Lazlo – Life In Hungary After The War**

Marianne discusses how her life returned to something closer to normal. She describes her education both at school and at university. She then goes on to speak about the Hungarian Uprising of 1956 and the decision that she and her new husband made to leave Hungary.

INT: How long did it take until you got back to normal? Some sort of normal in your old home?

ML: I don’t think we ever got back to normal.

INT: Never got back to normal.

ML: Never back to normal, I should say. But we just managed to do something there.

INT: What about your education Marianne?

ML: This is what I wanted to go on to. After that there was not enough Jewish children…there was no Jewish school anymore so I had to take a…because I had lost one year of education while we were away in the, in the Holocaust when they took us into the… deported us to the slave labour camp.

I lost one year and then when I went back we had a special course and an exam and then we managed to get in to the church school. There was not a state school yet it was still a school run by the church…well, like the Church of Scotland.

INT: Right.

ML: Or something similar, a Protestant Hungarian…

INT: Hungarian Reformed Church.

ML: Yes. And they had a school, a girls’, ‘Gymnasium’ they called it and one for boys. So I went to the girls’ school so I didn’t really…lost year… because the one year that I lost during the Holocaust I made an exam so I could manage to join to the group the same age in the school.

And then it just went on; education went on as normal. There were only three Jewish children in the class, in my class in that school and then there was a…when I was eighteen…seventeen/eighteen I was matriculated and then after I went to the university. But by this time it was the Red …, the communist system was in Hungary and we were taught in the communist system. And then 1956 there started the trouble, the Hungarian uprising when a lot of children, or a lot of people, especially students were very unhappy that they could get literature from every country but they weren’t allowed to get a visa, weren’t allowed to go and travel like other people travelled in the free world and we were very unhappy about it. And then the Hungarian uprising started in 1956 in October.

INT: Can I just stop you for a minute? That’s…from the end of the war to the uprising that’s eleven years. But in that eleven years you graduated, you went out to work, you got married, yes? Tell me a bit more about that.

ML: Well I finished school and went to university and I met my husband who was already a lecturer in the medical school and it was a custom in the communist system that on the 1st of May we used to march and celebrate the May Day and then that’s where I met my husband. And then, and then after that…well we got married and in ’56, in the uprising…well, he didn’t want to go out and especially my husband didn’t want to leave Hungary. And then his professor was encouraging him and told him ‘Just go, go, because young people have no future in this country any longer – just go, go, go.’

**Marianne Lazlo – Immigration**

Marianne gives a vivid description of leaving Hungary without passports and just the clothes that she and her husband were wearing. She explains what happened to them when they arrived in Austria and why they were given permission to come to Britain. Her positive feelings on arrival in Britain are clearly evident.

ML: And then we went, we went, we came out. And then it was very difficult because we didn’t have a passport, we couldn’t get a passport so we had to… through contact, we had a contact with a fisherman who was living up at Lake Fertö, which is a lake where half of the lake is in Hungary and the other half of the lake is in Austria. And then we went and spent the night in his house. We gave him all our savings and then we didn’t have a penny on us anymore, nothing, just the clothes that we had on. And then he took us into his fishing boat and we went up to the middle of the lake and left us at midnight in the lake and then he went back because he said ‘The border guard is coming now’ and they would catch him. So we were hiding in a…

INT: In a cabin in the boat? Were you in the boat?

ML: No, no, no, he went back with the boat to Hungary.

INT: Yes.

ML: So we were hiding in the…how do you call this?

INT: Trees?

ML: Not trees…

INT: Were you on the other side of the lake, in Austria?

ML: No, no. We were sitting on the middle of the lake.

INT: The middle, were you on an island?

ML: A little island or something. And we were staying there and he went back with the boat to Hungary and said to me ‘I’ll come back when the change of guard is over. It will be safer’.

INT: Yes.

ML: And we were left the two of us and it was very, very cold. It was wintertime and wet and cold. And we wanted to light a fire, a bonfire, to warm us up but the match didn’t light because it was too wet so we were afraid that he might not come back.

INT: Yes.

ML: And he took all our money and everything. But he was honest enough and sure enough he came back. He came back early morning and he picked us up again. And then was…rowed to the other side to Austria and then we came, climbed out of the boat and started to walk up on to the pier and then he just turned back and went back to Hungary. And we were walking by this time the Austrian Border Guard was looking for people because they knew that Hungarians are coming through/coming over.

INT: Yes.

ML: And they picked us up and then they said, the first thing they said, they looked at us and, ‘Oh you, you are ‘schmutzig’ or something, I don’t know, because we were all covered with mud.

INT: They called you dirty? Schmutzig.

ML: Yes and then he took us in to his house, you know, this…and they gave us a cup of tea and warmed us up and later on they took us further up into Vienna where there was already a group of people in one of these camps. And that was that; that’s how we left Hungary. And after that there were people came, a lot of people went to the American Embassy and applied for visa and entry to America and then a lot, quite a lot of people from the British Embassy came as well and they were looking for people. They said they need miners and they need teachers and they need doctors and then they selected the people that they needed then put us in the boat and we came to Dover.

INT: Yes. Was your husband Mr…Doctor Lazlo was it?

ML: Yes.

INT: A doctor.

ML: Yes.

INT: And so he could come to Britain because he was.

ML: Yes. And then a lot of miners came as well because at that time I didn’t know, we didn’t know anything about it but it was the miners’ strike.

INT: Oh yes.

ML: And they had to replace the miners in Britain.

INT: Yes.

ML: So they replaced them with Hungarian miners.

INT: Yes.

ML: And I suppose shortly after a lot of miners left to Canada and some of them went back to Hungary.

INT: Yes.

ML: Because British miners said you are breaking solidarity with them and international solidarity with miners and all that sort of carry on.

INT: Yes.

ML: Well, so anyway that’s how we came to Britain and I remember we came and saw, the first time I saw the white cliff of Dover and I couldn’t believe it, it was something out of this world.

And then there was the woman’s voluntary service and they gave us tea and bread and butter, all free of charge. So we stuffed ourselves with bread and butter and tea. So that was it. We came to Britain and then here again there were some people…there were disused old army camps and that’s where they placed us, in army camps down in the south of England. And then people started to go to work and moved on and there was no problem. My husband got a job straight away with British drug houses as a researcher and then…but he wanted to go back to university so after that he moved to London and he was doing his PhD, St Thomas’s hospital. And then he got a job in Edinburgh University after that and then we came up, moved up, to Edinburgh in ’59.

**Marianne Lazlo – Integration**

Marianne describes her first jobs. Then she goes on to talk about arriving in Edinburgh where her three children were born. She explains that she loved Edinburgh from the start and thought it was ‘something out of this world’. She talks about the historic links between Scotland and Hungary and her children’s integration into Scottish society, despite their Hungarian surname.

INT: Did you go out to work?

ML: I was working, yes I was first off… at different works. At one stage I got a job at Stoke Mandeville Hospital as an auxiliary nurse. It was very interesting because my English wasn’t very good and the nurses hated me because I couldn’t speak to them and they asked me always to do all the dirty jobs that I wasn’t supposed to be doing, that was supposed to be her job, their job…they asked me to do it. So it wasn’t a very nice experience. Anyway, after my husband got a job and we moved to another place so I left that and moved and got another job. I got a job in Chertsey in a porcelain factory in the research department and I got a job there as a technician.

And then, and then we moved to London and then my husband was doing his PhD. I had a job at the head office of Sainsbury’s in the office. That was quite a good job. And after that another job at Barclay…what was the name of…it’s another big factory/big place…packing something. Again I got a job in the lab testing the papers or whatever.

Anyway, after my husband got a job in Edinburgh we moved up to Edinburgh. And then…came up and we got a bungalow, bought a bungalow in one part of Edinburgh and got a mortgage. And then my children started, my family started and then the house/bungalow was too small so we moved to a bigger house, where I am still living in the same house on my own because since then my children have all grown up and they are all away and I am on my own, and my husband died as well. And that’s it. And I liked in Edinburgh and I like it in Scotland.

INT: Yes, tell me your first impressions of Scotland? What were your first impressions of Scotland? Can you remember?

ML: I loved it. It was beautiful. I really loved it because the part where I come from in Hungary is a plain; there is no mountain, no river, no nothing…just plain, that part of Hungary where I come from. And the first time when I saw the hills Arthur’s Seat or the Pentlands or Portobello, the sea…it was just something out of this world. It was to me. I liked it very much and I liked the Scottish people because I noticed that their customs are very similar to the Hungarian customs and I couldn’t make out why is that. They had the haggis and we also had the haggis as well.

INT: They eat haggis?

ML: Haggis yes and all that sort of thing. And then later I discovered that actually we have a connection, the Hungarians and the Scots, because Queen Margaret of Scotland grew up in St Stephen’s household who was a Hungarian King. And this Queen Margaret and her brother, who was English, they had to escape, as refugees, they went to Hungary and they grew up and learned and were educated in the St Stephen’s household in Hungary. And I thought maybe, I believe she brought in the Christianity to Scotland, or so I believe – I don’t know. And then maybe their customs originated from this time. So I loved Scotland; I loved the custom of Scotland and I liked the scenery in Scotland – it’s lovely; it’s nice.

INT: Did you find the people friendly?

ML: Some people very, very friendly but I found there is another type of people, especially in Edinburgh they are very clannish and they couldn’t forgive me that I am a foreigner, and they behaved accordingly. But then I got used to it. I used to be bothered about it but then I got used to it and I don’t even notice it anymore. But you can’t change people, that’s it.

INT: So, you brought up… tell me a bit about your family. What children you have?

ML: Well, I have three children. Well I am Jewish but I am not a ‘so called’ very practising Jew, I’m sort of half/half. I’m pretty open-minded and I have a lot of non-Jewish friends as well. But I have found a lot of people who are not very sincere and I don’t like that.

INT: You have three sons?

ML: I have three sons and they were all born and bred and educated in Edinburgh and then went to the Aberdeen University and Dundee and St Andrews University and Napier in Edinburgh. So all three of them are educated and graduated and they all have good jobs, they are all working. Unfortunately they are working down in England because it was very difficult for them to find a job in Scotland.

INT: Yes.

ML: And they… I suggested to them to change their name but, no, they keep their Hungarian name and I remember my first son, in the Primary School there was a school exchange with France and a group of French children came to Scotland, to Edinburgh and a group of children from the school, from Edinburgh, went to France.

And then I kitted out my son with a kilt and then when the holiday was over, the trip was over, they came home and they had brought me a newspaper cutting of a French newspaper where it says, with a picture, with a photograph that my son Andrew Lazlo is representing the Scottish, a school of Scottish children in France. So that was my son with a Hungarian name with a kilt representing Scotland in France.

**Marianne Lazlo – Reflection On Life**

Marianne talks about the effect her experiences have had on her. She explains why she is glad she came to Scotland and did not go to America, as her sisters did. Finally Marianne explains why she is now finally free of ‘her Holocaust’.

INT: That’s a lovely story. And looking back over your life are there any reflections, any reflections on your life as a whole that you would like to make?

ML: Well I’ve been through quite a lot especially in my, in those years when actually my character was forming and I think what I’ve been through has made me a better person and more tolerant and more understanding of other cultures and other people and other peoples manifestations so…

INT: And are you glad that you came to Scotland and you didn’t go to America?

ML: Yes, absolutely. Because I have two sisters in America and when I went to visit them I didn’t like America. It’s too… I think it’s a very selfish country and too much money minded and too much rushing around and I’m not particularly very fond of Americans anyway because I don’t like the way of living.

INT: Well I think we’ll stop it there, Marianne. Thank you very much for telling us about your arrival in Scotland and everything that happened to you before and afterwards. Thank you.

ML: Some of it. Well they can’t hear it.

[break]

INT: Ok we’re recording again with Marianne Lazlo. This is an additional piece she would like to include in reflections on life.

ML: Now, since I’ve been in Edinburgh and made Edinburgh my adopted home and I was very happy here and I used to have, or still have, a friend on the East coast in Longniddry and sometimes I go to visit her. And then to go to get to Longniddry, to the East coast I had to go through Craighall, Newcraighall.

There was a brick factory near the railway, exactly the same situation as I was reminded by this to my home town in Debrecen when we were deported and marched to the brick factory and kept there for a few days until the cattle wagon pulled up on the railway and we were forced into the cattle wagon and deported. And then this brick factory always reminded me of this event when I was a child because the brick factory all over in Europe I think, everywhere, is built in the same style and the same, under a…, like a blueprint on the same print. It’s like the Germans were doing the whole, during the Holocaust – the concentration camps, every concentration camp, which was all over; in Poland, Austria and Germany where-ever, all built on a blueprint, were all the same.

And then this brick factory obviously reminded me of that time when we were rounded up and had to march to the brick factory. And then it always brought back memories for me from my childhood.

However, I always wanted to forget it because I don’t like to remember bad things. But one day they rebuilt, or improved the environment and improved the town and I found that the brick factory was completely demolished.

In Edinburgh, at Newcraighall there is a lovely new shopping centre built on top of it and then when I noticed that I felt free, really free because I thought now the last reminder of the Holocaust, of my Holocaust, was disappeared. So now I am free, really free, now in Scotland, in Edinburgh because there is no more brick factory to remind me of the bad time.

INT: I think that’s a wonderful story Marianne to add into your memories of settling in in Scotland and your reflections on life. Thank you.