**Judith Rosenberg – Life Before The War**

Judith describes her joyful early years in Hungary and then her growing awareness that life was changing in a frightening way.

INT: Today is the 5th of May 2013 and we’re here to interview Judith Rosenberg. Judith, can I start by asking you where you were born, when you were born and what was your name at birth?

JR: Yeah, this I can tell you. I was born in 1922 in Gyor, G-Y-O-R; it’s a town in Hungary. It’s the town nearest to Vienna. It’s in the north part of Hungary.

INT: And can you tell us a little about your family life before everything changed?

JR: When you are very young you feel you only know the people who you mix with or your mother and dad mixed with and you think the whole world is like that.

But it’s taken us years to realise that some people are rich, some people are poor; you know, how people are. But when you are young you are involved with your own life, you know, and I had a sister who was 3 years younger and…I really just don’t know what to tell you. We had…I thought life was wonderful. I thought everybody lived like that. It’s taken me years to realise everybody does not live like that, you know.

INT: What did your father do?

JR: My father…Now, I think you call it here, had a sawmill. We bought timber from forest and they cut it into slices in different ways.

And in those days we had horses; in Hungary there were no cars so there were carriages made but it’s not for smartness, if you imagine it, I don’t know the word, it was for delivering coal and, to the houses, you know. The coalman came; he had the coal in sacks in a carriage. I don’t know if this is the right expression?

INT: Like a cart?

JR: A cart, yes. You tell me.

INT: Yes.

JR: Because I don’t want to make it feel that, you know, it was something high falutin’.

INT: Right.

JR: That was his business. He was a coal merchant and had a sawmill and the timber that he cut, that was for building houses, to building these carts; to building, all sorts of building material. You must remember that was in the 1920s, it’s a long time back. Everything was built by timber and the sawmill cut up the timber first into, let’s say, it was centimetres, it wasn’t inches, you know. So it was in 10cm, 5cm thick things and we loved it and we loved to go there as kids to play, because having horses we had haylofts and you could slide down the haylofts, you know. I mean it’s totally different from what you imagine life to be.

INT: Absolutely. And what was your surname in those days?

JR: My surname was Weinberger and I always remember when things became difficult at home I was still in the Gymnasium, that’s called a Gymnasium here but it’s not a sport type of school; it’s Latin based.

INT: Yes, we would call it a grammar school.

JR: A grammar, Yes. And I was there until I was eighteen and had Highers. But by the time I had my Highers there was what they called ‘numerus clausus’ Only 5% of Jewish people were allowed to stay at higher schools, you know. That was in 1940.

INT: And then what happened – because things must have started changing noticeably then

JR: Things were changing already before. In those days there was no television and we were very lucky to have a radio because my father listened to it. I wasn’t all that interested but things became more and more tense. I only know because Father always said ‘You must study because I can only give you what is in your head. I won’t be always here to look after you’. You know and that made us feel that things were difficult. Then I heard Father listening to Hitler and, do you know there is a programme just now, I think called Quest, on Freeview. It’s about Hitler and his henchmen. How different things are now! As then I know we were very afraid of the word Hitler, you know?

INT: Really?

JR: Yes, yes, yes. You can’t help being conscious because Hungary was always an anti-Semitic country. They called them nyilaskereszt.. It was not hakenkreuz in German but nyil is a, is a, you know, a pointer.

**Judith Rosenberg – Life During The War And The Aftermath**

Judith describes life in Hungary between 1940 and 1944 as increasing [anti-Semitism](https://gatheringthevoices.com/glossary/anti-semitism/) made life much more difficult for Jewish people. She then talks about what happened to her family after the Nazis took over Hungary. She describes their horrifying journey to Auschwitz and her time there. Being young enough to work, she is selected to go to Lippstadt in Germany where her skills as a clock repairer help her survive. Finally she talks about her experiences after liberation and her chance meeting with the Glasgow man she later marries.

INT: Going back to war time, what then happened?

JR: Now, war time…

INT: You finished your education.

JR: How can I say to you? In those days wartime started I think ’39-ish.

INT: ‘39

JR: And I finished my Highers in 1940 and…wait a second…You felt it very much at school. Everything was for the glorious German republic, you know. The teachers were, if you were Jewish they sort of, you know. There were four of us girls in the whole town who finished Highers.

INT: Four Jewish girls?

JR: What?

INT: Four Jewish girls?

JR: Four Jewish girls, yes. And it, in the Gymnasium in Gyor you must be skilled, you know, in those days. You must be the ones who finish. My name was Weinberger, another girl was called Schnaber,and Pearl Jeutze she was Jewish as well. I can’t think of the fourth one, you know. I only mentioned three but there were four of us who finished Highers. Now, you see, when we finished Highers the boys were still at home and you were eighteen years old and you were more interested in boys than in Hitler, you know – that was Father’s business and living was our business!

You know, having Highers and having a…we didn’t have a party like here but nevertheless we went down to the local café, the whole lot of us and the boys asked us to dance, you know. You know, it just shows what’s important and what is not important. It depends on your age.

INT: It does. And when did it finally hit you that you weren’t able to go on to university or what happened?

JR: University, it’s good that you asked because I nearly forget. The university was not in our town; it was in Budapest. And I had very good Highers. We were only kept in if you had good Highers; you know, the rest were already left out before. And in those days in Budapest University it was well known one of the girls who was there the year before, she was regularly beaten up, yes, in Budapest and…

INT: Because she was Jewish?

JR: Because…I suppose it was because, you see today everything that happens in Afghanistan is in The Sunday News but in those days we didn’t even know what happened in Czechoslovakia, you know. News did not travel like it does today. I had relations in Czechoslovakia and in those days between ’40 and ’44, they were all taken to concentration camps, they disappeared. We didn’t even notice.

INT: Is that right?

JR: They were not further away…Piešt’any, I don’t think it was 100 miles away, you know. So life is such I can’t tell you what happened in the next town never mind, you know, because the news did not travel.

We were taken away to Auschwitz in 1944 but between 1940 and ’44 things became….we were very aware that we are Jewish because some of our girls who had Highers, the non-Jewish ones, they didn’t speak to you. You started having to wear the yellow star, people…people could come in the street and spit you in the face and nobody would do anything about it. So much so that my sister, who had a, she considered it she had a more ‘Jewish’ nose, she wanted it…Oh there was a new operation for changing your nose and in 19… I think, ’40 to’42 she had a nose operation. It was very expensive and she forced my father to take her to Budapest and it, it was not even successful you know.

INT: Because she was frightened?

JR: My sister was so afraid and she travelled after we were back home and we thought she was a hero to go onto the train because they could, they could beat you to death.

INT: Really? And that’s before Hitler

JR: That’s before

INT: Took over Hungary

JR: That was before, yes.

INT: No I didn’t know that.

JR: Yes. Now it was my sister and myself, and then I know I have it very faintly in my memory that there was a children’s transport. Now it wasn’t in Gyor but it was somewhere. I think it was in Vienna and I remember when father sat down with us, that, ‘If it comes here would you want to go? But so far as I’m concerned, I don’t want my family to separate’. I just… I don’t know whether I made this up or whether I remember it. I’m really now not all so clear about these things.

INT: It’s a long time.

JR: Long time memories. But I do know when we were taken away from home

INT: So Judith would you like to tell us how you got to Auschwitz? Tell us about the transport please?

JR: Yes. The year that we got to Auschwitz was in 1944. We were rounded up in our town, you had to leave your house and if you were found in your house, if you hadn’t left for wherever they had told you…It was a ghetto in Gyor and we had to get to that ghetto let’s say within 24 hours. It wasn’t more than 48. You had to get in the same time and you had to watch the news because it was a question of life or death, you know. And so we had to leave our house and there was a ghetto in our town where the very orthodox people lived. And you had to find a place there to spend a night.

And then after we found a place there to spend a night in, in that so-called ghetto, next morning they came for us; transport came, and we were put out in our town to the place where the gypsies were. It was all cleared off and we were all guided in there and so we looked around, it was horrifically dirty and anyway you couldn’t help yourself. The only thing I remember there were several families in a room, that father put down his coat and said ‘This is our, our area just now. You children sit down.’ You know. And father went out looking around, it was dreadful because everybody was upset and…Anyway we were in that gypsy camp and next morning…The gypsy camp was beside a railway station and next morning they came-

‘Everybody out, the train is coming, come and take your places in the train.’

Now before you got into the train there was an examination of whatever you had in your hand. We, as children I even carried my teddy bear I remember. And some people had, some married women had serious… And it was all open examination if they hide anything anywhere. Anyway this examination, whatever you had in your hand if they wanted to keep it they kept it. And they’d thrown it all open. You could take up your things; you had maybe some sheets in it, collect it and we were going onto a railway train. Now, the train was roughly, it was a train for cattle to be transported.

It was from the last lot of cattle, there was an awful lot of dirt around and you had very little room. It was just about as much room as to sit down in, the family to sit together. And there were roughly 70-80 people. I remember this just, whether it was so or not I don’t know but somebody must have said it, per carriage. But recently I read a book and that brought it back to me, the memory, because I really wanted to forget about it. No sooner did you get onto the train; there was one bucket put into that train. But of course there were a lot of ill and old people and all sorts of…it wasn’t jauntily dressed, it was very smelly.

From the gypsy place and, you know, quickly leaving the place you don’t have time to wash yourself. And as human beings the fright makes you want to go to the toilet; there was one bucket for 70 people. I mean it’s, it was unbelievable. You couldn’t empty the bucket so you had to try to pull it through the front entrance, try to put it down or through the…there were 2 little windows; they were barbed wired, but you couldn’t push it out because it came back to you. I just remember the fright. I…it was something unimaginable and I’m sure it must have been the same for your mother too because we were all on this kind of journey going to Auschwitz.

Now whether it lasted 5 days or longer I have today no imagination but before we got to Auschwitz I would say maybe in our carriage there were a lot of old and ill people but a lot of them were dead. So we tried to put the dead apart from those who were alive, to one side. Father said ‘Please just leave me. I’ll do it’. And there were another 2 or 3 men who tried to put the dead to one side to give us a bit more room. I mean it’s unbelievable even to tell you that, you know. And when some of the people were screaming we had to hold their mouths; we were so afraid that the soldiers will come in and just shoot us, you know, from the noise.

And after 5 days I can’t tell you about the filth that was in that…It’s…Today I can’t believe it myself but it was so. That’s right, 3 or 5 days…it wasn’t 3 days, it was more than 3 days. We must have arrived and the train got opened and they sent… When they opened the door, you see a lot of bodies fell out; they sent all the dead bodies first and then you would just jump on top of it and come down. I don’t believe it that I went through all that, you know, but I remember. And then as we got down the men were separated from the women and they said that there are buses waiting for you – whoever wants to go on the bus just go.

But Father always said, never take the easy option with Germans, you know. I remember that. This I remember very clearly, never take a bus if you can walk and never run if you can…You know, like always do the more difficult option. So eventually we get off the train and we got, it must have been a big, big room we were led into. By that time the women were separate from the men. I don’t know where the men went because I was a girl and we were all collected. Now I can’t tell you how many people but I knew it couldn’t have been less than 500. In that room you were surrounded. I thought it was maybe German soldiers; maybe they were Auschwitz men: maybe they were Polish soldiers, I mean we didn’t speak to them.

We were surrounded by soldiers, who each held a dog, and I must say the dogs were never left off the leash but we were told to get undressed. I hate to even say that.

INT: Right.

JR: All that happened. We looked around, I was a young girl of 21, undressed, I took off my coat because we had so much clothes on to try to…whatever we could put on to survive in it. And you take off your coat, then I think you take off, it was a jacket under it and then they started prodding you ‘Come on! Undress! Undress! Undress!’ You know, until we were all totally naked. and we had to go forward, we were pushed going forward and there was a row of barbers and they came with…

INT: Clippers?

JR: You know I don’t believe it happened to me. They came with…

INT: Clippers.

JR: Yes and cut everybody’s hair whether it was long or short. You had to put your arms out, you were shaved underneath, you were shaved in the private parts too, you were…a lot of them were cut and then they pushed you forward, forward, all shaved, and by the time we were shaved, ‘Mother! Where are you? Mother!’ And nobody recognised their friends or their mothers because without clothes, without hair, you don’t recognise each other. And I remember the fright.

We thought that’s the end of anything. And then I don’t know, how we got some clothes in the end, and the Germans from other transport, you know as they got undressed; we got some clothes from there and then we were put into the barracks. And there was…you could not, there was not enough room for everybody to sit, you had to open your legs that…Mother opened her legs so that we can, you know, that we can…

INT: Sit.

JR: Sit. Otherwise we had to stand. And I remember the first night, it was horrific and a lot of people died. They just died. they turned round and died.

I’d never seen anything like that. And a lot of them turned yellow. It’s, I’m really not crying, I don’t believe it what I’m telling you. Anyway, that’s how the first night went. But next morning, you see there was, there was only buckets outside and as human beings we need things, you know. It’s…and next morning everything was full and there was what they called zählappell, a roll call. We had to be outside and they were counting us for hours in rows of 5 and then somebody said, ‘You, you, you, you, you go separate.’ And we didn’t know what that meant. It was to empty the buckets. Oh…I really, I can’t believe it I’m telling you that.

It’s…we were in Auschwitz for about, I think it was, it was in the spring sometime and I think we were in Auschwitz until August but I’m not sure about all that. But we were only a short time. Until one of the roll calls they said ‘You are going to be…You, you, you go to this end. You, you, you, you go to…’ And we noticed all the ones who went were the younger ones, you know. My mother was 41 years old, she didn’t look particularly old and she came and some people even changed. And we never knew what we were chosen for. Did your mother ever talk about that?

INT: Yes.

JR: Yes. We were marched away and we marched to a door, like a closed door like that and it said on it ‘Gaskammer’ [gas chamber] and we got such a fright, you have no idea. But they just opened the door – in you go – and it wasn’t gas it was water that came out the showers and we were actually washed. We could wash ourselves.

INT: And was that the first time you’d been into that place that said gas…?

JR: What darling?

INT: Was that the first time you’d been there?

JR: That’s the first time I had any inkling I think. The only other thing is we heard music all the time and it’s after the war that I read that that music was covering up the screams but whether it’s true or not I wasn’t…I haven’t heard it, you know.

INT: So you..?

JR: I was one of the lucky ones with the young ones, you know, your Susan was only 20 years or 19 years old.

INT: Yes, 19.

JR: They were even younger than me so all of us in a young group were showered and got some of the clothes off, must have been from the transported, as you’d taken it off. You got a coat, it was written on it ‘haeftling’ [prisoner] and we got some sort of a shoe…I really can’t tell you that I remember everything. And we came out the other side; we were dried up, I don’t know if we had towels, we must have had.

And we were put on trains. By that time we had enough room to sit on the train, it was, it was luxury comparatively to what came out of. And the train went from Poland, from Auschwitz, right into Germany to Lippstadt where we were. Now I don’t know if the train taken 2 days, I have no idea because at the time already the British… It was June because it was D-Day, you know in 1944 and that’s how the towns, the small towns were emptied but Budapest never got emptied because they couldn’t afford the trains. So we got onto this train and we actually got to Lippstadt and that’s when I met…I was from Gyor, your mother was from Székesfehérvár, I met your mother [Susan Singerman], I didn’t meet Eczi. There was no time for socialising.

INT: So you didn’t meet Susan in Auschwitz? You met her…You didn’t meet Susan in Auschwitz, you met her in Lippstadt for the first time?

JR: It was in Lippstadt. In Auschwitz we had no time to even say hello. I was looking for my mother all the time, you know.

INT: Right.

JR: I don’t know what we did. I think it was every day just people just died and we tried… To be quite honest when somebody died we could sit a bit more comfortably on the floor. It was awful, you know. I mean I was today thinking to even talk like that…And so we got to Lippstadt. Now, how can I say to you?

So we were in Lippstadt and we were told there is straw outside, here are straw bags, fill your bag with straw and this is, there was 3 tier beds and you filled it with straw and your mother was in the bed either above me or beside me. That’s how I first met her [Susan Singerman] you know. Did your mother say that?

INT: Yes.

JR: Yes. And the straw was, when people were taken away it was so full of lice that you couldn’t, you just brushed it off yourself and you couldn’t…there was so little straw. And this girl, next morning and we laughed at her, her ears got so swollen from the lice biting her that it was hanging down and can you imagine that we can laugh? How can you laugh at that?

Anyway the factory needed workers and we were right away put to work and we got very little food. Every day soup came to the factory and we got a piece of bread, what they called bread. And we were there for, I should imagine from August until next, until we were liberated. In the factory I was, I myself personally was very lucky. I don’t know whether your mother told you I repaired watches? And the factory was, there was no men; they were all out in the front and the women who ran the factory… It was hand grenades. The machines couldn’t work because women didn’t know how to repair them and from my watch making ability I did know what a lathe means and how…and I said ‘Oh you should do this’.

They said ‘How do you know?’ I said ‘Because I was an Uhrmacherin’. You know what an Uhrmacherin is? A watch repairer. And they gave me a cubicle and they brought several sacks full of different clocks, machine clocks and he says, ‘Repair them’. I didn’t know because I had no spare parts, nothing, but I opened it and from the watches I remember they were all the same. I could take the good part from one watch, put it into another watch and repaired it and it worked. Oh for that they gave me a special place and you know, so special, you know. In the factory there were a few very old men who were working and when they’d seen us all starving one of the old men got up and he had half his soup and taken his soup and emptied it into my bowl and I thought that was heaven, you know.

If you’re hungry, everything is heaven. And now, Lippstadt was not bombed but it was in the Ruhr Valley.The Germans who worked there was women and men, there was very few men, mostly women in the camp. None of us ran away because we didn’t know where to run. We had no clothes; we had no shoes and we had big Hakenkreuz you know on our back, we couldn’t get anywhere. We couldn’t. It wasn’t like British prisoners of war. …work was 12 hours, from 6 in the morning to 6 at night and…Now when was that? That was from August over the winter and we were, we were put on the road because they felt that the Front was coming, you know, the British and Americans coming near. I think we were liberated at Easter Sunday.

JR: Is it?

INT: Yes, that’s what my mother said.

JR: Yes. Because all the bells were going…

INT: And were you on a march then or…?

JR: We were on a march but I think we were marching round and round. I don’t think, I think they set out to go inside the country. But I think we were just…We were in a, …I call it a forest but it was not a big forest. And I remember seeing the army downstairs, the American Army. I think Susan must have said that too.

INT: Yes.

JR: And, because this was, we all seen, all the 500. So we were liberated, all the 500 of us. And I think it was one of the very few camps who were liberated without anybody dying, yes. When they were looking for interpreters and I had a friend called Emy and her mother and myself and there was a Dutch man coming around, he said ‘Can you speak German and English?’ I said, ‘German quite perfectly’. But English I learned. But the Germans needed a…not the Germans, the British needed us for military government to do translations and I got a job right away in the 603 Military Government in…Now, was that…that was in Warburg, yes in Warburg. Susan got a job somewhere else.

INT: In Gottingen.

INT: Were your mother and sister there at that time?

JR: My mother and sister did not get a job because mother spoke German but did not speak English and my sister did not speak either. So they were looking for… As prisoners of war, were brought in, interpreters to sit in and…the British didn’t know a word of German…We got liberated in Easter; I think within a month or even less I had a job and Mother said you must take a job and we were never paid but what we did get, we got a wonderful flat for the 3 of us and the British officers’ mess fed us.

They fed us with chocolate and coffee and tea, everything that was worth fortunes there, you know.

INT: Right

JR: We had sausages. I was in the Military Government, the 603, and the occupying troops that came also to Warburg but only occupied the area I think for about a month and then they were put to a different area. And one of the occupying troops came into Military Government, he says, ‘Come for tea to the officers’ mess tomorrow afternoon’. I said ‘Thank you very much, I’m very appreciative’. And Emy and her mother, the three of us, went for tea and one of the officers, they all were very interested, you know we were Jewish and liberated and things and one of them says, ‘Are you Jewish?’ and I said ‘Yes’, he said ‘One of our officers comes back tomorrow.’ He says ‘He went home to Glasgow for holiday’.

INT: And he’s Jewish?

JR: So I was invited next week back again and the girls were invited too because they all wanted to talk to us, you know. It was a very nice social life. And I met Harold.

INT: Harold

INT: Oh

JR: He was the Jewish officer.

INT: Is that right. And how long was that before you were married ?

JR: And my mother still stayed in the camp but they were very well looked after. They got American UNRWA parcels you know, and all the gifts and clothes and even us, they opened German houses, you could steal from everything.

It was a dreadful thing we have done to the Germans too, we paid them back believe me. It was not funny for the Germans either. But, so my mother by October, she says…In September she said ‘I must plan to go home because your father might be liberated somewhere. I must look for your father.’ So when Harold heard that he says, ‘Please, I just want to tell you I am going to marry your daughter’. But mother always said ‘All these promises from soldiers!’ But Harold said, ‘But I swear to you I want to marry your daughter. Please leave her. She has a job, she’s doing well and don’t let her go back to Hungary.’ And I was very tempted to stay and I stayed, yes.

And I stayed for a full year. We married…that was in ’45 and we married in April ’46. But then you couldn’t marry because Harold was in the army and I was an enemy alien and he had to go to the…how do you call it?…, he had to go to the Adjutant.

INT: Yes, yes

JR: Then higher up in the…and eventually he had to go to Montgomery who was the chief. and I have got actual…that’s why I’m so sorry that everything got lost…I’ve got a thing from Montgomery authorising the marriage.

INT: Goodness

JR: And do you know after all this time, to get up to Montgomery he only had Harold one question to ask and he said ‘Rosenberg, are you Jewish?’ He says ‘Yes’ ‘And is the young lady you want to marry Jewish?’ He says ‘Yes’. ‘In that case permission is granted.’

INT: Very good.

JR: Yes

INT: That’s good.

JR: Yes. So is that an interesting story?

INT: Yes a very interesting story.

INT: And where did you get married Judith?

JR: We got married in Warburg, yes.

INT: Yes.

JR: ’45 we got liberated and I met Harold and ’46, April, he got permit to marry me and he was, by that time, could have been demobbed a year earlier because he was seven years in the army. But he waited till I got, you know, we got the permit. And I had a Jewish wedding in Warburg by a Jewish…the army supplied a Jewish minister called Richards from Manchester and I had a Ketuba, you know.

INT: Tell us about the wedding.

JR: The wedding was (under) a Tallit, a Jewish praying shawl, held up on 4 swords and the 4 swords were held up by four Polish officers who got liberated. They were all Jewish officers. It was a rabbi called Richards from Manchester, he did the service. And yes, what I wanted to say – everybody cried. Not because of the wedding wasn’t a happy affair… Because nobody had any family, everybody was there by themselves. So it was very precious for everybody and after the wedding I had some photographs taken. Now my wedding, I had a black suit on. Why was it black?

Because you couldn’t buy anything in Germany, there were no shops but people had black material for a funeral put aside and somebody, a Polish officer, managed to persuade a German man to give that black suit and I think Harold paid…I don’t know, coffee and tea and everything because money was not worth anything. So I have got that photograph, in that black suit with a white blouse. I got from somebody a hat and the local nuns in the hospital had a tiny garden about one yard square. They had a few flowers and I held those. They gave me flowers. And it was, there was no, they couldn’t get any beef for the lunch but the officers went out to hunt for stags because in Germany there was, there was a lot of hunts.

And I remember Harold saying to that Richards chap, he says ‘I’m sorry, I can’t get you anything kosher’. He says ‘Don’t worry we have got a solution. We don’t need to. During wartime everything is OK.’ So I got married and that night they booked for us in the Forstmeister’s house. It was a beautiful big house and then I stop after, I told you that. We went in a jeep, there were 2 people in front of it blowing a trumpet and the whole village was out. I mean there was no wedding there for years. Everybody who knew me from military government, the whole village was out because after the wedding Harold invited everybody from the village for a drink.

We didn’t know who we invited we just…they knew I worked in military government as an interpreter like your mother worked.

INT: Yes.

JR: And everybody came afterwards up to the flat and everybody had a drink. And some of my friends from military government got me little presents. It was all their own, somebody given me a glass, somebody given me a little purse and I had a table and I put all this out. It was wonderful to get presents. When the party was over…with the drinks…I looked for the presents, everybody had taken, there was no presents left.

INT: They took them back?

JR: Everybody stole everything. They were so short.

INT: Right, so did you have local German people then at your wedding?

JR: Yes. Everybody was, everybody who was working. I..I mean the war was just over. In April 1946 I got married. The war was over in ’45 and that year I worked in military government I made, I mean everybody knew us, you know. We went out to the farmers to buy things for the officers’ mess, you know.

INT: It’s interesting that you didn’t feel that you shouldn’t invite Germans to the wedding.

JR: I didn’t invite anybody; it was everybody was welcome.

INT: Everybody. That was very nice.

JR: Yes, everybody was welcome. Actually… You see you don’t hate people when you meet them. I met German people; I met Russian girls and we were, we always had…I tell you one funny story. We had plenty food but Harold was, he knew somebody who was in charge of the food store and he used to bring us every day a tin of sausages. I never forget. There was 3 of us and by the time we’d had 5 or 6 sausages it was enough. So there was still, there was about 30 sausages in a tin, there was still 10 left. So what did we do?

So Emy says to me ‘There must be a local picture house’ She heard about it. She said ‘We’ll go down to the picture house and see if we can get picture tickets for them.’ So we went down to the picture house and went to the desk. I said ‘We have no money but we have got sausages’. He looked at it ‘Oh, oh just come in! Just come in. Please come back tomorrow!’ You know, because everybody was starving.

INT: Right.

JR: And we had, I mean I who was starving could understand it, and we had food by that time, you know. We were invited to the officers’ mess for afternoon tea because Harold was there, you know.

And the officers themselves, they were so short, after the war, of company that they were happy to chat to us. Every afternoon – ‘Just come in for tea, just come in.’ You know. It’s different. You know, I’m not exaggerating. Suddenly we were the ones who were the top dogs, you know. And I didn’t have any clothes, you couldn’t buy them, but I got British uniforms. We had no right to wear it but the war was over and we had nothing else to wear.

**Judith Rosenberg – Immigration**

Judith describes her arrival in Glasgow and the challenges of integration. She then talks about returning to Hungary, where she was finally reunited with her mother.

INT: And then you came to Glasgow after the war.

JR: After the war, after April the 14th, the 15th, we were on our way home to Glasgow. I came on the military trains.

INT: April the 15th 1946?

JR: April 1946, yes I’ll try to keep the dates correct. And we got home and there was great shortages at home, Oh God. I remember my father-in-law brought in 12 eggs – ‘I got these especially for you to come home’. It was such a big…he thought it was a treasure you know. It was such…In Britain they were fairly short. For quite a few years there was great food shortage. But as it happened Harold didn’t make much money, we couldn’t afford very much! Even food was short, yes.

INT: And did you start mixing in Glasgow with the Jewish community through Harold? What happened?

JR: Now it was first very difficult. We were Garnethill (Synagogue) members. Harold was a ‘West Ender’ – But he lived with his parents in the West End and my mother-in-law said ‘You must come to Shul’ and I went to Shul. But the Scottish people…it’s so much easier to talk to Claire (interviewer), as I know who your mother was. Here is somebody who is Hungarian, what do I ask her? My father is here…And nobody was interested in where my…So they didn’t talk to me, you know. So at first I could have been anybody. It was very difficult.

There was one family in Glasgow who overcame it right away and its funny, yesterday I spoke to her. It was called the Naftalin family, Suzie Naftalin’s mother Beulah, her dad, Leslie and (uncle) Sydney (and aunt, Marjorie) they came forward, said, ‘You are from Hungary, you must come and visit us.’ So they were my first contacts in Glasgow and then it takes a long time. I don’t blame the Glasgow people; I don’t know how I am with foreigners. You know how it’s very difficult to go over and ask, ‘How are you?’ you know.

INT: Yes, of course.

JR: But even Dr Cosgrove (the minister of Garnethill Synagogue) – do you know when I was in Glasgow, the Chief Rabbi was called Brodie and Brodie came to visit Cosgrove and Cosgrove said,

‘I hope Judith you would like to meet him’

and I said ‘Very nice’.

Do you know I was invited to Cosgrove’s in the afternoon, Brodie couldn’t care less, couldn’t care less. It didn’t matter to him. You see British people never realised what it was, the war. Did your mother ever say that? No?

INT: I don’t remember her talking about that, no.

INT: Did any of your family come out of Hungary and join you?

JR: When Harold decided to marry me in September and I said I will have to go home with my mother because we were looking for my father. My father disappeared in Auschwitz and mother hoped that no doubt that he will be alive, you know. So mother wanted to go home and Harold says

‘Please leave your daughter back, I will marry her.’

And my mother says ‘How can I rely on that?’

Harold says ‘I promise you I will marry your daughter.’

And I had this job in the military government and they wanted to keep me. And my mother went home with my sister. It was a very complicated journey. They could only get onto a train that went east and Harold from all the officer friends and everything collected coffee, cigarettes, chocolates…And my mother had nothing in her bag but goodies and that’s how she paid her way home. It’d taken over a week; I think it was even longer because you couldn’t get on a train, you know. And she got home and of course she had no house. In Hungary they said, ‘Hitler didn’t do a good job’. ‘What are you coming back for?’ People who were in your house didn’t want you.

INT: So what happened? What happened to her?

JR: Eventually… My mother had two brothers in Budapest and she went to Budapest and she stayed with the brothers until eventually I think one of the brothers got her a flat. It was a very poky little flat but it didn’t really matter. But…And my sister went home with my mother and they had a very difficult time. So I have not managed to talk to my mother. I didn’t know where she was; she didn’t have a telephone. There was no post; there was no way to finding out. Until one day my mother must have gone… In Budapest there was a ?- how do you say that? …?… is a…Do you know any Hungarian?

INT: No.

JR: It’s the Jewish Centre.

INT: Right

INT: Oh yes.

JR: And there was tables and tables of letters from everybody looking for relatives and my mother, by sheer mistake, picked up a letter, who was one of my father’s brother’s sons from Vienna, sent it over. “I am looking for my family; they are called Weinberger” you know. And my mother found that letter and somehow this cousin…I don’t know how. Through some…I think it was called…It was a Jewish organisation and it came to me. How did I get it? I don’t, I really don’t know the detail.

But that was, I married in ’46, that was not until ’48. I have not known if my mother got home; if they live or don’t live. There was no way of finding out because my mother didn’t know my address; I didn’t know hers.

INT: Once you found that out did you try and go back?

JR: I’m just trying to think. Do you know that I’m not absolutely sure. I think Harold eventually got in touch with the Jewish Centre in Hungary and how did he…? Because he knew, we knew that mother went home and the Jewish Centre was in Budapest, you know. After the war there must have been lots of groups of people who got together.

I can’t tell you for sure that I know, you know. And somehow we got in touch with my mother. And in ’49, I think the first planes started to fly; until then there was absolutely no contact. I didn’t… And by that time my mother contacted us or Harold contacted her, I really don’t know. And all that I wanted to do is maybe we could go home if there’s a plane. Now, I didn’t know where my mother lived in very poor circumstances and I think it was 1949 or 1951 – now I’m not sure of the date, we couldn’t afford even to get an air ticket and my in-laws helped us to get a ticket. I think to go to Hungary and have the hotel and everything all together cost about twenty odd pounds, you know, and we did not have the 20-odd pounds.

Harold was working for his uncle – it was the family business of shoes; it was his grandpa’s and…But the grandpa was 90-odd years old and I think up until now he had a monthly salary and then they put it over to weekly and we got another £10 and I think with the £30 we went. We went home and met my mother. It was, she was really poorly off but we’d taken her presents. We couldn’t leave her money. I didn’t have any money. We’d taken her presents and that was very valuable in Hungary. I never knew – a 200 pack of cigarettes…And that was a fortune.

INT: Right.

JR: And coffee and you know, what you could get here. And I think we were home for a week. I’m not sure about the things, you know. If you say to me it was 2 weeks – it feels like, now like a week. And then we came back, and my in-laws, my mother and father-in-law, they thought we would never come back. There was no train; you know, there was no communication.

**Judith Rosenberg – Integration**

Judith tells the interviewers that life improved for her and Harold. Her mother remained in Hungary and Harold helped support her there.

INT: And did your mother stay in Hungary then for the rest of her life?

JR: She stayed in Hungary for…But then things quickly became better. Harold had a better job and I started in business, working, and both of us were earning and I was very successful. I opened a children’s shop. How I did it I don’t know because I couldn’t do it today. And then we managed to send home money. Harold looked after my family all his life.

INT: Right.

JR: I mean that’s quite something. He married me with nothing and to have to look after…But my mother was very good and she came for many years to Glasgow for the summer months. And Beulah and Leslie Naftalin and yesterday Suzie remembers her too, yes. I think that’s enough, yes.

**Judith Rosenberg – Reflection On Life**

Judith concludes by describing the high point in her life – her husband Harold’s love and loyalty to her and her love for him.

INT: Just one last question Judith. If you look, looking back on your life what would you say was the high point of your life?

JR: The high point of my life was, without doubt – until I got married I couldn’t believe it that I could get married. You see how…Maybe Harold will be demobbed and soldiers disappear and I’m left alone in Germany. I was never sure of myself. But then he kept to his word; he never veered for a minute, you know. So…You know, find somebody who loves you and you love him back, it’s a real love story.

JR: The idea that he actually stayed and waited for me. I mean I didn’t have much; I didn’t have much…How do you call it?

INT: To offer?

JR: Clothes. I had nothing.

INT: Well, I think that indeed is a very good place to stop.

JR: Yes. To get a husband who loves you, and in those days he didn’t look after my mother yet. That was later on. It was like Madam Butterfly in a different way. He did come and he never left my side.

INT: Thank you Judith.

JR: Yes I think that’s enough.

INT: That’s fine, thank you Judith.

JR: Finish on a high note.

INT: Absolutely.

JR: OK