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Suzanne Foldes interview 2/9/95

cut

SWB:Why don't you begin by telling me where you were and

what...

SUZANNE FOLDES: Well we were in [ Iggy Farbin's

Bumfishtella\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_]bump filling station. And eh whenever

the bombing was heavy at Marbrok, we had nothing to do there

was no steam coming over then we had to clean, constantly

clean the factory. After a while there was nothing to clean

the factory so they brought us out to

[Bierstraut]\_\_\_\_\_\_\_which meant that we were just pushing

little carriages. These went that way with stones, but

there was nothing to do really, inhale.... and there was

one older SS man who kept eh telling us news which we didn't

want to believe. He and we were really afraid even to

listen to him, we were a little afraid of him that he was

probably a [jarcoette]\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. But he was telling us

stories like eh we were \_\_\_\_\_\_\_young \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_and such at the

end which sounded strange. One morning around elevenish,

they came after us to the factory and rushed us into the

camp. And they gave their last soup and rushed us out from

there and we were on the road. We were on the road, and

that evening the [really fight fast dong] distance. I

wouldn't know how big a distance it was because the whole

group was quite big by then. But it was a sign that they

are rushing from the West over to the East. We were way out

of the West part of Germany. Inhale.... And on that way,

that night they made us stop on a opening in the forest and

we were over night in there and early morning, next morning,

they were pushing us further on. But by then strangely the

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SS people were not dressed into uniform. They had some

civilian clothes on underneath the big windbreakers and they

started to walk into different directions and some had the

bicycle nearby and was getting on that and they were just

leaving us. And at that point, I said to my family and

friends that I'm leaving them too. I don't let myself

somewhere where they don't to go???? They said I'm crazy, I

must not do such a thing, but I just kept going along and eh

ran right into the forest. But they couldn't resist

following me and so about nine of us were together now away

from the big group and went into nowhere; we had no idea

where we go. But when we got to the other edge of this

little forest we saw a rout, and on that road, army was

moving, slowly. Like sickish-ly\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_horse-drawn eh

horse-drawn carriage and such. It was the German's, the

back of the German's going back from the front. And of

course, that's the reason we were on that other road not to

be able to see them or not to be in their way. And so we

didn't dare to go out there. We stayed in this road-side

little forest and kept going into a little village and they

stopped at the edge of this village and of course in the

meantime, before getting there we got through fields. There

we found some radishes and eh something was still thrown

around there not picked up which we made good use of. That

was something to eat, cause they forgot to give us anything

to eat by then. Then we got to the edge of this village,

then we started at this left house and we dared to and the

guy looked us over and he said you can go up to the barns

and at the barn above there the hay, we can stay. So we

stayed. And for the day, for the for the night he came to

the evening, around evening and he said we should go further

in. And we went further in. But we still wanted to know

what's happening outside so we had our ears out. And we

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didn't sleep much. We had no idea where we were all of a

sudden we heard loud voices and eh it was evident that some

army men or SS men tried to come to the same place where we

were. He wanted to hide there. Coming up on the ladder and

then he saw heads around and he just jumped down and went

away from it and was yelling with this peasant that this is

not the right place for me. The next morning, we had to get

out from there, [said it was all done] \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. And we

started to go house to house, and asked for food. We didn't

even realize it was Good Friday so they were all cooking for

this holiday. And there was potatoes and there was bread,

real bread. And they were cutting a slice here and there

and they said that we can not eat it here because our sister

is waiting outside and wanted to give her, too. Don't

forget we were two of us who spoke German who dared to go

into the house and explain that we are hungry. We didn't

need to express too much, they could see it on us. And then

we went back to our present house and we were in the yard,

and at two o'clock in the afternoon there were big noises.

Sigh......And eh a tank - kind of thing stopped in front of

us. Evidently they were waiting for the whole line to come

and they wanted to come into the village to get an enforce,

not knowing what to expect. But we looked out on the gate

and we saw that our landlord had divided pair of paints

hanging out. That was the the only thing that he could put

out for a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_flag, evidently. Inhale. And then

we went out. We went to first GI's. The GI's were very

excited seeing us. Now we started to speak English, the

little English we knew and tell them who we are. So they

looked at what they had leftovers and they had some from the

breakfast ration and some cigarettes and we were asking for

cigarettes we haven't seen for months and months and months.

Eight of us were smoking one Camel and all of us had seen

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the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_in broad day light. Too strong for

us, it was some inhale....unearthly feeling and of course,

they were yelling to each other and everybody was looking

for what they can find for us. And they went out and they

came out of the street and they felt liberated. Big big

feeling. But it wasn't a sure thing. We we were just not

sure we were still with the German's and they they left and

we were here with the German's. Of course the German's,

they did not call us into the kitchenette. We had fresh

potatoes to eat. She cooked a lot of potatoes and she was

very surprised and in no time there was no potatoes left.

By then we were fourteen of us.

cut

SWB:

SUZANNE FOLDES: So there were all of us heard the big

noises. And they had to see what's happening. And they saw

some...

SWB:

cut

SUZANNE FOLDES: All of a sudden we heard big noises and we

saw some big grey tank-like thing and the American star was

and now we know that the American's here. Evidently they

were waiting until the groups gets up close to them, sigh,

and we just got off from this court and went over to them

and then we started now to speak in our little broken

English. And then we told them who we are, they started to

look out up there and tried to through all kinds of things

what they had left over from their breakfast packages. The

cigarettes were coming because that's what we were asking

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for of course and I think the feeling of liberation came

when we had the first Camel when we were eight of us smoking

together and all of us saw the day light. During the day

light, the broad day light all the stars were strong. We

were hungry and weren't use to cigarettes anymore so months

and months we hadn't seen one. See that was minute we

realized that we were liberated. Soon after that the

American group started to move on and we were left here and

we had no idea whats happening to us now that they left and

we stayed. So we tried to go after them and so we got on

main street into the area where from other areas also some

others who were hidden around came forward. So ah Moroccan,

black guys, Russian girls, and it was an absolute holiday

spirit with all these people laughing at not understanding

what's happening to them. Free to go out and they had to

speak to each other and the Moroccan come over and kiss our

hands, our hands which were yellow from the {sow peta

sword}\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Yes it was human again, humanity

came. When we went back to the house, the peasants had on

fresh potatoes cooked and invited us into the kitchen to

have potatoes with them. In no time there were no potatoes

left in this huge amount of potatoes just disappeared. All

this hungry people seeing the first real thing was they

probably always wished for, simple, good potatoes.

Inhale.....And the I think next day was when they came for

us that we should go up to the mayor's house and there was a

big room, a huge table set-up for all of us and everybody in

this village had to bring a dish of food so that it was all

poured together and that mixture we ate. It was wonderful.

It was really Easter kind of food. For us, probably for

them tht was nothing, but eh something what they had to give

and em they were not really giving with happy hearts. For

them it was over and for us it will start. Inhale.....The

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next day, the mayor had given us fourteen of us a place to

move to. It was a kindergaden with tiney little chairs and

tables. Of course no place to go to sleep, but on the side

there was hay put down and for us it was marvelous. But to

have to tell you something what probably you can not even

understand. Outside on the in that garden there was a

little outhouse, the size of normal two small children size.

And if you had ever seen these very.....sigh....how should I

put it.....long pause.....people who had anymore no desire

to laugh, laughed at they had tears running that was the

place where it first happened. It was just unbelievable

that this is where we will have to use. From there in a

week or so we were moved into a hotel. And that was already

room, bed. Even a place to put something down I which was

very sad I had nothing to put down yet but while living

there we were accumulating. We started to sew dresses for

ourselves. Started to feed in order to go out for milk

because there was nothing enough for us. And of course

seeing guests. The GI's came to visit with us the evenings.

They were nearby, they got their rest place for, uh, two

hundred people were there and they were allowed to the

swimming pool now. It was becoming spring and summer and

there was no one else allowed there but us. Cough... The

Russian were not allowed to mix with the Americans or other

Americans were not to mix with them. Not with the Germans.

So we were the only ones they were allowed to mix. And boy

we were happy that they were human beings to talk to and who

could tell us what's happening around us. But of course,

not everything was so easy. There were times when all of a

sudden the American's troops went westward and we were

scared that were probably pushed back. We really didn't

know where the \_\_\_\_\_\_and we were in this village when the

President died. And the American GI's came crying like

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babies to us like if their father died. Very very big, big

for all of us.

SWB:

SUZANNE FOLDES: yes

SWB:

SUZANNE FOLDES: There was practical no interactions. The

American who was in charge of the village gave orders to the

mayor and the mayor gave orders \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. And it was

ordered and they were not happy to fulfill it. But here

were by then, they probably had 100 120 refugees, DP's, and

they had to do it so they they did it. But nothing more

than what they had to do. So like in this hotel where we

lived. There was a family owning it they were to cook for

us. They didn't. When we asked for something that we would

like to have something, they couldn't do it. The once we

mentioned that to a GI who went to the officer who was in

charge and he asked us to what we need to what we wanted to

make. And we said eggs and sugar and flour and they claimed

that they have it only as much they are getting on their

tickets. And they can not give us. So they deliver it for

us. And then some of these people who where there in that

resting place later, turned out to be able to get from the

PX things what they needed,like handkerchiefs, like soup,

and so we found one who came over to us on the poolside, all

their stuff while the rest was frolicking in the water. And

he said to us that he was Jewish and that he was taken from

home when he son was probably three days old. He was

allowed to go home to see him but right after then they

shipped out. And since then he didn't have a Friday night.

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So he will be bringing the hallah. Would we \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_a

Friday night and yes he brought Candle's too, and yes we had

our first Friday night. Him crying like we were crying.

pause....He later became my brother. He came home to

America where originally he suggested that I and a

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_sister of mine should come because his mother never

had daughters and would be very happy to have us, we should

come. But, we had to explain to him that we still hope that

he find somebody from our family who went back to Hungary.

So we just can not do that. But we stayed in correspondence

and when I wrote him that I am getting married.....long

pause....

cut

SUZANNE FOLDES: The Yugoslavia asked for the Jew and since

in our group were about 50 who were from the Southern part

of Hungary which came, became Yugoslavia later they were

getting ready and the American gave them three busses to go

home by which wasn't full. And three American soldiers who

were just going down visit to take them home. Which meant

that one of wanted to go to [Terrizia] and look for his

family and that was the way he managed that. He was the

leader, and we ment him later and we asked him, "could we

come along?" We would stop earlier then they go to

Yugoslavia but they have to go through Hungary so let us go

with them. And so we they allowed us to, so we went. In

Prague the American embassy asked us forgiveness and that

they are ready to take back our citizenship which they are

now happy in giving back to us. And from there we traveled

down to Budapest, [long pause]...I went to try to visit my

Aunt and Uncle to see if they are alive or there and find

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out something on the rest of the family. My aunt was home

and to my biggest surprise was telling me that my father is

home in [Iraq]. But they wanted me to tell them about my

mother, and my husband, about whom they haven't heard. They

knew that I was on my way home because my father was told by

somebody who heard the [Matclauss] radio that I was on the

list of the people alive. And when my father heard that he

wanted to make some big festivity out of it, so he bought a

half a pound of apricots for himself; that was his way of

celebration because his only daughter is alive and comes

back. And then I arrived, late one night with my aunt and

uncle and then I went back to my father, who was half his

size, and, awful happy to see me. And he wanted me to take

over everything that was left there and start caring for it,

which I was unable to. So --------(I have no idea) . I

just could not ...expect, uh, accept anything, but I had to

go and try to find other things which we were putting away

with other people. I went back to Budapest, and from there

to some of the suburbs of it, to try to find people and

find, find out what happened to the things they were putting

away for us. Very few did; very few were honest, but there

were some. But to go to Budapest meant that we were on a

train which either had coal to heat it and make steam, or

not. And we were [placed for standing] hours before we

could go further. And the Russian soldiers came into the

car, looked around, and who didn't look too old, they pulled

out from the train, pushed them right under the train, and

raped them right there. And then they left them there.

Yelling, screaming...didn't [count]. And that was home.

You arrived home.

S: Okay, tell me more about the things that you got back.

Did you get some of your things back?

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SUZANNE FOLDES: Yes, there was one man who didn't even tell

his wife that he had taken things from me. And he was the

military security forces officer- wonderful person, but in a

very frightening job. But when we had to put the yellow

star on, {Pruss} went out to the street. He was standing in

front of my father's store, and came over and kissed our

hand - in uniform - to show that he's not afraid to do so,

that he still has the same respect for us that he had

before. This man had taken some jewelry from me, and when I

arrived to him that September, he was still in England. His

brother knew about it; when I send them a card, his wife

show it to her brother-in-law and the brother-in-law said,

'Yes, I have things here for her.' The wife only found out

then. Yes, the bed linen what they had, what he also took

from me, were put under the stairs in their house when the

Russians came in, they were carrying it out, no big deal,

[this] was at least honest and told what happened and the

other things which the husband put away with his brother was

given back with me the leather little bag what was holding

it was [gone/torn] apart because [fatness was really] had

put it into the water under faucet. My oriental rocks in

the middle got wet and were rotten out but they were upset

with me that something was ruined; they were happy to give

it back. But there were few of these. Most of them did not

expect us back and took full advantage of what they could

take. My winter coat, according to the lady who was living

in the building where we used to live, was walking by all

winter long on somebody's back. She was [Varek], never gave

it back either. Very few gave back.

S: Tell me the moment that you and your father greeted each

other. Tell me what it was like.

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SUZANNE FOLDES: I think it..I can't even tell you. There

was this little old man who was then [for] sixty-two years

old, and completely broken, and who just grabbed me and

couldn't believe that he's really having my arm in his hand.

And we're standing there that way, "What happened to your

mother?". And I tell him I feel responsible for having lost

her because I think I didn't fight for her. Probably I

should have tried to argue with {Mangalin}. Why didn't I

try? Fifty years back and I still cannot reconcile to that.

It happened very fast. Earlier when we looked out from the

[regom] when we stopped at the station my mother said we

won't survive that and I said yes we will and she said no we

won't. And people were telling us that she should cover her

hair because right up front there was a little gray in her

hair, nothing bad, she was 46 altogether and that little one

up front was her killer. And when they told us to cover her

hair it was so hard. She says,"Oh, I wouldn't do such a

thing." And in no time she went with her friends which

were,... We were in a row of 5 with two of her friends and

one of them had a daughter who was older than I was but was

very thin, very petite. She went like a child to the same

side. I was the only one sent to the [inaudible, probably

camp]. And so I was to tell that to my father. And my

father's sister, or rather my mother's sister who was there

helping my father survive without family. She came down to

cook for him, from Budapest. And since in Budapest they had

nothing to eat, it was good for her, too, to come down to

[Michclauds'} because there was in the store there was

always something coming to the table. And here was the big

apartment and all the friends who had no place to go to were

invited by my father so they all lived in one corner of one

room, one other room, and the other room. This started a

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new life again. But what I wanted to tell you about when I

got married and became pregnant and [rode rough cats] to

Chicago. And I'm pregnant and since I know that they had a

baby boy, if they had anything left from the baby, theirs, I

would, could very well use it. When I was seven months

pregnant, a huge box came filled with brand new things from

a department house. At the very top was one used little

baby [hat-bought]. It was their greeting for the baby.

Ever since I have tried to send them something because I was

already standing on my feet and I wanted to show my

appreciation. I sent some [Handeburgs], some real artwork

from Hungary to his wife and to his mother, in [a

vancitmake]. That was that. He didn't want to get

something; he just wanted to leave.

S: Thank you very much....

SUZANNE FOLDES: You know it's strange but ideas, things came

up in my mind which I haven't thought of in the last

[thirty] years.

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