

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Agnes Adachi
February 11, 1992
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PREFACE

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AGNES ADACHI

February 11, 1992

This is SR-1, CR-1 is up. Wentworth Films, Holocaust. Interview with A. Adachi. Director, Sandy Bradley. February 11, 1992. Lloyd Harbor, Long Island, NY. Reference tones -8DB.

Beep.

Q: Let's start with start with you telling me what it was like to hear that the war had begun, and how everyday life changed, wearing the yellow star, all the things that changed.

A: Well, uh, you know that, that the war started in 1939, and I was in Switzerland minding my own business, and, uh, I just came back to Switzerland from a wonderful trip, uh to, France with other students, and when we arrived back to Geneva '39, beginning of September, uh there was a Zionist Congress in, uh, Geneva, and the people took time out in the beaches, and we were all out in the beach with my friends, and suddenly the microphone blared that Poland was overrun by the Nazis. Well, you could have dropped a needle right there in the...place. People, half-naked bodies, they ran everywhere to, to call home and see what was happening, and this was my first inclination that there was really a war going on. I wanted to stay in Switzerland, but we have very good friends, and they talked me into it, to go back. In the beginning of 1941, I went home because my friends said that the allies were not allowed to go on and on, and Hungary will not be in the war. And when I got back to Hungary, it was fairly quiet. The Aerocross, what is the Hungarian Nazi party did not really take over completely in '41 yet. And, the only thing, there were even American ----- all over, and I was teaching English to the young lady who today is Congressman Lantesh's wife, and she looked like Shirley Temple, and we used to walk on the street with our hats up and talking English. Was still allowed to speak English on the street, but then suddenly we got deeply in trouble in Czechoslovakia, from Romania, from Poland, those who could get run away, and they told us the stories. We didn't believe. Not the Jews and not the Christians, who were anti Nazis. We just didn't believe that it humanly possible that they do that. We were listening to the BBC now on the end of, oh let's see, in the middle of '43 suddenly everything changed. Then, the Hungarian Nazi party took over, and suddenly they reminded us that we should

put on the star. My father has been taken from the house, and took in the labor camp, but in a couple of weeks, they let him come back home. We were not moved out of our house. And then they started to forbid to talk English, and therefore, Annette or Agi was her name too, we went down the street, and we spoke English because we had a hootsper(ph) or whatever, but nobody ever stopped us on the streets because we didn't really look like two Jewish kids, and we did not wear the star. But we didn't go out too much, and then the BBC was not allowed to be listened to it anymore, but of course we did because that was the only way to find out what's going on during the war, and I was lucky enough to have a huge big radio my parents bought me for my 21st birthday, where we could have the whole world. So whatever news it came in was through our house because I could get short wave stations, and it was very exciting to hear what's going on, and very heartbreak--we begin to believe that it can happen to us any moment. And then it did happen in 4 April, when they walked Eichmann. And immediately he killed almost 600,000 people in the country. In Budapest, however, they only went by list of people, whom they should pick up. We were still not being picked up. And life began to be more and more difficult because we didn't dare to go out on the street if it possible, only to shop, and eh, you didn't know what's happening next morning. And that was your question, what happened day before. So that was the life, just about.

Q: Were you afraid? What kinds of things did you witness?

A: Well, I first witnessed, and that was a horror for me, the, the Hungarian Aerocross wore green shirts, as you know each of them had their own shirts. The uh Germans, they wore the brown shirts, the Fascists, uh, in Italy wore the black shirts, and our Hungarians guys wore the yellow, uh, the uh, green ones. And, uh, I went out on the street one day and I saw a priest coming out of a church, and he had a green shirt on, and a Nazi, uh, sign upon him, a Hungarian Nazi, and there was a little boy of 3, and he killed the child. That was the first time the religion went out of me. No more religion, thank you. If a priest can do that, then, I don't know. And I went home and I cried and I cried. And then this is something what we never can figure out--I worked in a wonderful hotel in Budapest. I don't know how many of you went there, of course these hotels are not there anymore--it was the Hotel Ritz. And as I spoke a lot of languages, I, I had been working there, and it was wonderful. And, uh, one Sunday morning, or a few days before I got this letter from the Swedish Embassy to come and visit them, and I, uh, had no time right then, it wasn't so very

important. But, it was a Sunday morning when a very excited neighbor ran into us, and he said, "Oh, just, I heard on BBC that Adam Horthy is going to give up being with the Germans, and he is going to be with the allies." And my father was all excited, he was running for the champagne, and me, spoke up, I says, "Papa, don't believe what you hear. Don't drink the champagne." "Oh, you young people, you don't know what you talking about." And he brought the champagne, and we were just about drinking when Horthy came on television, on uh radio, and he said very beautifully, that "I now tell you that we are with the allied forces, and not with the Nazis army anymore." And that moment, the German horse whistle came over the radio, and we didn't hear Horthy's voice; I dropped my glass and I ran out because I knew I had to go to work to the hotel. And it was a gorgeous beautiful March day, it was sunshine, very cold, and I come out and it was blackened by airplanes. And I thought they were Americans or British or Russians, and I was running all the way to the hotel, and when I get there, the porter said to me, "Mr. Merrinch wants to see you at once, and that was the manager of the hotel. He was a gentle man, huge big gentleman about 250 pounds. He spoke 12 languages. He was Yugoslavian, and he was the manager. And he took me in his arm, and he said to me in French, "Child, go home. These are not British or Americans. These are the Germans, and Horthy was already arrested. Go home, I don't want them to take you from here." So, I run back home, and father, all he could say is, "You were right." Now I decided I'm going to the Swedish Embassy. And, uh, there was difficulty to go up there because uh, everybody was afraid to go to foreign embassy, but my cousin had a very wonderful boyfriend, who was a Christian, who had a big black Mercedes Benz, and he said, "I'll take you up." And he arrived in a Nazi Uniform. He had a Nazi flag on his car. He pushed me in there, and took me up to the Embassy. And, uh the ambassador was quite surprised when he looked up and saw the Nazi flag, and I explained to him what happened. And, then he explained to me the absolutely out of world thing, that I have a fiancé in Sweden. Well, that's a long story, yes, I had a very dear friend in Sweden with whom I corresponded for 12 years, and he explained to me that this young man went to the king and to the foreign minister and said that this woman would be my wife already, but the war came, and therefore she should be Swedish. And they handed me a Swedish passport. And I looked, and I said, "A what?" So, I became a Swedish citizen, and you can see on those, I have that passport here, it says there, Emergency Passport. They also gave these to Swedish people if they didn't have the hard cover passport, hard cover paper. And, then, the ambassador explained that he would like to keep me at the embassy. And I said, "Yes, but I have my parents home." And

he said, "We will send somebody down to your parents, and tell them what happened and why, but we are responsible for you." So, I have been the guest of the Swedish government for 3 or, glorious weeks, except my heart inside was hurting, what can happen to my parents? And I found out while I was up there that I wasn't the only one who was

Q: We have to change rolls.

beep

Q: Can you explain to me about the edict to separate mixed couples, Christians and Jews who were married? Just tell me about that, because people can't believe such a thing could happen, and then explain what happened.

A: I will explain to you because I had an uncle who was a Unitarian, and an aunt who was a Jew, and they had a wonderful marriage, and suddenly the radio uh declared that all married couples, or mixed marriages, either divorce immediately, or both of them will be killed. And, my many, many people there were found dead together. They cleaned the house, and then they went into a clean bath, and then they found them...suicidal by themselves. My uncle and aunt called too and they said, "We want to die because we will not separate." And I screamed at them, and I said, "You can't do that!" By that time we already had Raoul, and I said, "I get you papers." And I did. And they got themselves false papers too, and thanks God they lived through the war. But it was thousands of people who killed themselves, so it was a very easy people to kill...a easy time to kill people, because most of them would not divorce. One of them, Willa Kodai (ph), you know, the famous Hungarian musician, whose wife was a Jew, and he said, "I would never, never leave my wife." And they didn't touch him, and they didn't touch his wife either. But very few of them, thousands and thousands, they died.

Q: What about converting? Could you convert from Judaism to Christianity?

A: Yes. Now, on the other day there was a phone call there that anyone who is not into Jewish religion will be saved. Now, of course, we wanted to believe anything. And, again, I was a very

lucky girl because I grew up as an only Jew in Budapest's best Protestant school. And our principal at that time, and later on, he became the Bishop of Hungary, the Protestant Bishop. He was also my best friend because he had 7 daughters, and I was always in his house. And he arrived to our house, what was then still the Christian house, and he said to my father, who was the same age, "Uncle, I want to baptize your child, because she is my 7th daughter." Of course, Papa couldn't say no. We went down to the church, and my father cried very loud, and he kept on saying, "Papa, don't cry. I have a lot of Jews down there whom I saved, and if the Nazis find out..." And he christened me because he believed that it will help me. Possibly the miracle helped, but thousands and thousands of people died because nobody cared. That every other religion--that was just another off day, funny saying. Many time, of course, many people survived with false papers, who, who didn't look really Jewish, so uh, but it was also just a, a lie like everything else.

Q: Explain to me more about those lies. How did they fool people at the beginning, and keep it so you didn't believe what was happening?

A: Well, you see because every day there was something new in, in in the radio, and also, the threatening, if you go out, we kill you, if you do this, we kill you. And also, very quickly, the bombing started, and that made them extremely angry, that the Americans started to bomb us, and the American and British bomb that went all the way down to the basement. The Russian bombs, they only took the last 2 floors up on the top. And, so much so that while I was at the Embassy, my friend who brought me up and he came one day, and he said to the ambassador that I have to go home, otherwise they going to kill my parents, in the meantime, because of the Hungarian Nazis' anger--what they did they made every second house in Budapest a Jewish house, with a huge big Mogendovid on the house because their idea was that the Americans will not bomb the Jewish houses, and therefore, or then the Christians will be saved. Of course, they were wrong because they bombed the Jewish houses, they bombed the Christian houses, but they found the headquarters, and they bombed that too. And my parents had to move out from our apt and they moved in--thanks God my grandmother's house wasn't too far--her apt--and they moved, and the Nazis came every morning and they were reading names, and my name was still on. So they argued for a while, and I told the ambassador that it is my job to go home to my parents because they might kill the whole family. So they wouldn't allow me to go home with him. I had to go

down in a streetcar with one of the diplomats who was sitting quite away from me because he wanted to see where I'm going, with the promise that whenever they allow us out on the street, because we were allowed every day 2 hours to go out and shop with the star on, and you were lucky if you came back from shopping without being killed. And, if the telephone still worked, would I please call up. And, I was hardly down there for 2 wks when I called, and I was told to come back at once because there is something new happening. So, I had to go down on my knees to my friend, to take me up once more, promising that I will not stay. And there was Raoul Wallenberg, and uh, he introduced himself, I didn't really know who he was, ad uh, he asked me in English, that time, "Would you like to work with me?" And I showed him my star, and he started to laugh and Paranga was laughing, he says, "That's nothing! That's getting off." I said, "Yeah? How?" (Laughs) So, they told me how they gave me, him, they must have bribed the Hungarian police station because I had to go down all by myself. I didn't find out only later on that actually they were around in case I'm not coming out, so they can pick me up. And I went out to the police station, and police chief, whose name I can't remember, he took me in his arm, and he cried. He was a very good actor, and he said, "I'm so proud I'm the one who cuts the star off, and he didn't cut it off." And he said, "Remember my name come. Or the Americans. How good I was." He must have gotten quite a lot of money, and as I walked out I heard I somebody say, "Here goes another bloody Jew, and I thought, "Hah, now they're going to kill me." But they didn't. I made it all the way back. So, now Raoul Wallenberg hands me another paper, he said, "Get down to the house commission." By now, it was incredible, we had a housing commission because as soon as somebody got out of their beautiful home, somebody moved in. And he said, get your apt back. I said, "Really?" He said, "Yes, really." So by that time, I was all Raoul Wallenberg. I felt, if he's that strong and has not to do it, I can do it. And I was rather pretty girl, so I took up the best suit I had, and I walked with my paper in my hand, but inside of course, I was twisting, and I sort of threw it to the head of the man, and he gave me a dirty look, but without a word, he gave it back, he said, "Here." I walked out and I said, "Why? How come they just give it to me." Well, I forgot that it was actually in my father's name, so I walked back to our super, who uh, was living on us like a leach for years and years and years, and his wife was delighted to see me alive, but not him. And I said, I came to get my apt back, whereby she said, "Oh my daughter already has..." no, he said, uh, "My daughter is going to have your apt." So, the wife spoke up, said, "Our daughter already has an apt." So, I existed, sort of, and he said, well, he can't give it to me, I have to go to

the house's lawyer. I said fine. I walked all the way to the lawyer, and there was the same thing as with the policeman. Oh, I give it to you of course, but you must remember my name when they coming to tell how much good I did. I said sure, and I had -----, I said, "Of course I will. Naturally." So, then I walked back to the super, who was very surprised, and I got the signature, and we went upstairs, and funnily enough, "The apt was completely empty. Only one room, we had a maid's room, and that was closed, and when he opened it, I was terribly surprised to find all our paintings, furniture, everything was in there. So first I thought to myself, "Gee, he isn't such a bad man," until he opened his mouth, and he said, "I get even with you, yet." But at least, right now, I had it. So, I did the terrible thing--my parents didn't have any papers yet, but I walked back to the house, and I said, "Out!" And my father said, "But, how?" I said "Just get out. I have already shutzpasses from, for you from Raoul. Just get out." And I brought them back home. And, um, nothing happened. And then, what I did with Raoul, every day I had to go up there, and I went on the streetcar because they were over in Buda, and for a while I was hostessing, you know, I was with thousands and thousands of Jewish people, and, and eh, until Nazi, um, people came up to us for these paper...because when Raoul arrived and he asked what, what the embassy has done, they said, "We have given out 80 passports." And he said, "Eighty passports??? When there are eh, 280,000 people to be saved? That's nothing. And that's when he designed this beautiful shutzpass, what means protective pass, and people still keep on saying passports, there were no passports.

SR-2, WFI, HOLOCAUST, -----, CR 3 IS UP. 2/11/92. LLOYD HARBOR, NY

BEEP

Q: You heard a knock at the door, and it turned out to be a German soldier that you actually knew?

A: Ah, ha ha.

Q: Give me the background, too.

A: Okay, the background was that uh, uh, I was just about, uh, graduating from high school, and,

um, I got scarlet fever, so I never really graduated, they just gave me the paper. And I was supposed to go a German island at that time to very dear friends, who were Jewish, and uh, it didn't work. But, then, 1936 Olympic Games came, and that was about the last time that the Jews were allowed to be around, and they me invited me to Berlin instead. So, I went to Berlin, and I had a wonderful time--I, I watched Jesse Owens winning the Gold Medal for his flying instead of running and I thought he was wonderful because he was hated as much as we are because he was black. And, uh, it was wonderful, and then, in the days, what we took there, we went out to swim, and I met a lot of Germany also, and one of them was, uh, a young man, who exchanged cards, and my name was Mandel, and then years go by and there is the war, and the Nazis are in Budapest, and suddenly the ----- in my house, and I look out and I see a uniformed man, and my parents were, I mean, shaking. And I said, "But, Mommy, this is the boy from Germany." And I opened the door, but didn't let him in. And he said, "Agi, you remember me!" And, I said, "Yes, of course I remember you." That was already, we were back in our Christian house. And he said, "Would you show me Budapest?" And, I said, "Sure, I'd be glad to. Goodbye Mommy and Daddy," and out I went. I couldn't say I'm not going with you. Everybody in the house looked at me, and they didn't know whether I was taken or walking. And we walked around until we came to the synagogue, and this young man stopped there, and he said, "Do you see this synagogue." I said, "Yeah, sure." He said, "That's where I'm going to kill every single Jew." So my stomach went all the way down. What am I going to do now? If I tell him I am one, he will kill me right on the spot, and I can't afford it. And I turned to him and I said, "Did you ever know a Jew?" And he said, "No." I said, "Well, did any ever hurt you?" He says, "No!" I said, "Then why do want to kill them?" He says, "Hitler told me." So now I had to think very fast, and I looked at my watch, I said, "Oh, you have to forgive me, but I, I'm teaching English, and I have to run to a lesson. It was wonderful seeing you. And I run away. I never see him again. But, it was a frightening couple of hours.

Q: And now I want you to tell me about Raoul Wallenberg and, I've never heard of him, I don't know who he is. So, tell me very generally, if you had to tell me briefly who he is, and what he did.

A: Okay. Raoul Wallenberg is, was then, a young 32-year-old man from a neutral country. He was

an architect, everybody says he was the ambassador, he was a diplomat, he was not. He got his education here in Ann Arbor, Michigan, he became a top architect, and his uncle, his grandfather, Wallenberg grandfather was a diplomat, he was an ambassador to, uh, Tokyo and later on to, uh, Turkey, and he was the one who really brought Raoul up because his father died 3 mos. before he was born. And this little boy was surrounded by love, and he grew up with always caring about other people. And, uh, his grandfather saw to it that he learned all the European languages, and that he is a well-educated young man. And, he was funny, he was wonderful, he was a great actor, he usually imitated everybody, and, uh, he was just great, and when he came back from America, it was way in the 30s, and Hitler was already around, and he couldn't find anybody who wanted to build, so architect he couldn't be. So they sent him first to South Africa. His grandfather wanted him to learn the business of the Wallenberg's what was banking mostly. And when he got to Africa, very shortly he wrote to his grandfather, why aren't you doing something? They are killing the blacks here. They shouldn't do that. Those are wonderful people. And he was very disturbed and he was wanting to come back. Then, his grandfather sent him to Palestine, what was no Israel yet, to Haifa, and that's where he met first, these people who came from Germany, Poland, those who could run away, and they told him the horror stories. So, again he asked his grandfather to come back because he has to do something for humanities. So he came back to Stockholm, and of course, he couldn't do a thing for anyone, but he became a partner of a Hungarian Jew who couldn't travel anymore, who had a big import, export-import business in uh, food. And, uh, Raoul became his partner because he could travel around still, and every time he came back, he said to his partner, "-----, they're going to kill everybody. You can't imagine what they do in Germany. And what they do in Hungary. Let me go back to Hungary and bring your family out." And this Hungarian was laughing. He says, "Raoul, whom do you think you are? Jesus Christ or Moses? You can do nothing." In the meantime, finally, somebody went to Roosevelt, our president, and told him Hungary was the last country where there was ----- Jewish population, and it looks like that the Germans are going in there to kill everyone. Would he please help. So the Hunga--uh, The American Refugee Board has been erected, and the gentlemen by the name of Olsen has been sent to Sweden to find a person who would go with a mission to save people in Hungary. The Hun--, uh, the American Embassy was in the same house with Kalman Lauer(ph), the firm where Raoul worked, they figured they go to Hungarian Jew, maybe he knows someone. And when they told him what they want, he started to laugh, he said, "Yes, I have a young partner, and he

can talk of nothing else but saving the world." So I don't want to go in with you how many interviews he had, and probably because of these interviews it is that he is now 46 years in prison. Stockholm was a real spy center. there was a big coffee house there, where there were Russian spies, German spies, you name it. And Raoul had a lot of meetings there with this Mr. Olson. What turned out later on that he was man of the OSS, what was before the CIA. But Raoul had absolutely no idea, he just knew that he was an American. And talking to Raoul, and seeing how excited he was and what he wanted, they gave him the job to come to Hungary. He was 32 year old. His demand was, of course, that he needed a diplomatic passport because without that he couldn't travel. That's how he became the third secretary or fourth secretary of the Hungarian Embassy. He also demanded unlimited money, and when they asked him why, he said because I'm sure I will have to bribe the Germans and the Hungarians to save some people, and they said yes. And then the third one was that he wanted free-hand to do whatever he wanted in Hungary. Well, of course when he arrived to Budapest on July 9, 1944, uh, they didn't look at him very happily, the embassy, because there is someone who was never a diplomat, and he wants to take over. But it turned out that that's what happened. Raoul was the one who went to talk to people. Raoul was the one who saved the people. So now you know who Raoul is or was. A great wonderful human being, whose only idea was to help the innocent. And for this, they took him. And for many other reasons. but the way he saved the people was so incredible, and I can only talk for myself because I have not met anyone except the photographer, Thomas Welch, who has the same feeling that Raoul gave us such an enormous strength to do the same thing unafraid. Of course, we don't know either, whether he inside himself being afraid, and we too, maybe our stomachs sometimes didn't work the same way. But we just said no, we can do it. And we did the most incredible things because Raoul wanted us to do. And that was the beauty and he never thought of being afraid. He went out to the trains when the Germans took the people to already to take them to Auschwitz, and his pockets were full of all kind of papers, not just real shutzpasses but drivers license and this and that because the Germans couldn't read. And before he even shouted, he first gave the Hungarian man some drinks because they love cognac and all that, and made them good and drunk and asked them to help him, and he was shouting there, "Come out! Come out! All the people who have my papers!" And of course people suddenly realize that there is some angel who wants to help them, and he just handed them papers out, and before the Germans could really start shooting, he had hundred people on

our trucks, ----- trucks to bring them home. And then Raoul looked back, another hundred people were killed. But you can't just save everyone. And then another day when uh, when, in Hungary this year it was very early snowing in November and there were even in September already there were enormously cold coldest winter in 40 years, and they were marching people from Budapest all the way to Vienna. Even today, in a car, it's five hours. You can imagine what it was walking old people and children. And he would scream--I had a girlfriend there who was there with mother...

SR-3

beep

Q: Why don't you just continue and tell me some of the main things--incidents--that Raoul did.

A: Well, this one I'm just shortening it down for you that again he went and he had a big black book, and this time he went with Paranger, and another couple even Swiss people and of course the Red Cross trucks, and he would shout at the German in German, that, "I am a diplomat, and I will be sure that I will not help you people. If you don't let this out, all my protected people anybody with my papers turn around. My girlfriend with her mother and sister, we can be killed anyway, and they turned around. They had no papers, and Raoul just gave them something, and they went on, and they, in the United States today. And then he was started reading out names out of this black book, and of course everybody caught on and they just came, and on the way home, Paranga says to him, "Raoul, I didn't know we had a book with all the names, and he started hysterically laughing, and he says "You didn't know?" And he opens the book and not a single word in it. But that how he was. Then, we already had hospitals. We had 2 hospitals what eventually was used by everyone because it was right in the middle and if somebody was hurt from a bomb, they brought them in. But, Raoul was marvelous in learning names. And what he did first and he never forgot a name--he learned all the main uh Hungarian Aerocross officers names and where they were sitting in which office because they were all over. And one of the officers were right near our hospital and he arrives to our hospital one day unshaven and hungry, and I was there delivering meals to some patients I remember, and uh, he came in and there are these 3 little punks 13, 14 year old with a

gun. The doctor with his hands up, and the patient sitting, and Raoul couldn't speak Hungarian, but boy he could hit, and with all his might, and half German, half Hungarian, he hit these guys, and of course, the guns fell down, and he says, "Get out of here! And bring me your officer!" Three minutes pass. The boys left because they got such a hit, I think one of them even had a bloody nose, but Raoul didn't care, and he pushed away the guns. In walks an officer, and Raoul looks at him, he says, "Simon, what took you 3 minutes to get here, and the man was so surprised. He said, "How do you know my name, Mr. Wallenberg?" He knew that he was Wallenberg. He said, "I know everybody's name, and I don't understand why you don't bring me medication when that's what I was asking for. And, uh, I think you better go because I understand that you killed a German Gestapo officer by mistake and the guy said, "No, I didn't." He said, "Oh, yes you did. Because he died right here in our hospital, but before he died, he sent your name up to the headquarters, and they're looking for you." Without a word, Simon disappeared, and they all, you know, relax, and the doctor said, "Raoul, what did you just do?" And Raoul starts laughing. He said, "I did nothing. I knew it was Simon who was the officer, and we were lucky because it was Simon. So the doctor said, "Raoul, I never had a Gestapo officer here." Raoul sat down on the floor and started laughing. He says, "Of Course not. But he killed so many people, one of them could have been an officer. You see, this was his mind. He was in danger, they could have killed him. Simon could have killed him. But no, he had to try with a big lie, to help, and he did. And, and he was absolutely unafraid. We heard it in the tele, in the radio, uh, that uh, all young girls in the age of 18 and 25 have to go to such and such a sports palace, and clean up Budapest after the bombing. Well, we knew exactly where they going to go, and Raoul turned to us, he says, "Let's get the pictures because all of you must have young sisters and aunts and so forth, and let's write the passes. And that time, because we had to move all the time, because Eichmann was after all of us, especially after Raoul, Raoul slept somewhere else every night. And this time we were over in the Buda side in a very beautiful villa, and as it, they bombed all the time, we had only candlelight, and we had black curtains, and we were putting the pictures on and the ambassador was sitting there--Ambassador Danies--signing each of them. Around midnight Raoul arrives again unshaven, tired, but with a big smile when he came to us and said, "How are we doing? By three o'clock we have to uh send out all these passes." And that time we already had curfew in Hungary, not just for the Jews but for everyone, from 9 o'clock in the evening to 7 in the morning, no one was allowed out. But I was very surprised why in a gorgeous cold icy night with, with stars out, why don't they bomb us? Maybe

they knew what we heard in the radio, and they didn't want to, to bomb--no bombing. Quiet outside, beautiful, and I was the first already with 500 of my passes, but before we got ready, Raoul said, "Oh, I forgot to tell you a lovely great news, but don't look up, it's not important." We had new neighbors in the other villa. And, of course, we all looked up, and he said, "I told you, don't look up. It's only the German headquarters." Nobody cared. So, I had my 500 papers, and Raoul came over and put his had around me, he says, "Good luck, Kid." And I walked out. At that time, I was very young and very much in love with an Italian, and all I could think of was the war will be over, and the moon is out and, you know how young woman are, and I carried these 500 passes, and I delivered each of them, and some of them was my friend who opened the door and said, "Agi, what are you doing out in the street?" I said, "Don't worry about it, there is an angel who sent you the paper. I hope it saves your life." And only when I got home finally and I sat down on my bed around 4 o'clock and I said, "Oh my God, what did I just do? I could have been killed by the Nazis." And then, just like Raoul would think, he says, "the Nazis, they are great cowards, they wouldn't dare to be out on a night like that." And I went to sleep. At 6 o'clock in the morning, I woke up that my 2 girlfriends made it all the way back with these passes, and they came to our house. Then, we had, Raoul was away again, when he heard, the last day, that the Hungarian Nazi party had taken people down to the river. I don't know if you've been in Budapest or ever, Budapest is uh, two cities, and in the middle is the so called Blue Danube, for me it is the Red Danube, but that's what it was, and they took people down there, the Hungarian Nazis, and they roped 3 people together, and they shot the middle one, so they all fell in. And if they saw a movement, they shot again, so they'd be sure. But many people by themselves somehow got out. But it was a terribly cold winter, as I said, and the Danube was frozen with big slabs of ice. So, Raoul came home the third night, and there was no moonlight, no stars, just cold and dark. And he turned to us the first time, usually only talked to the men and the Red Cross, "How many of you can swim?" I have a big mouth, I put up my hand, I said, "Best swimmer in school." He says, "Let's go." And as you saw me coming in like a teddy bear, that's how I was dressed, and a hat and a gloves, and we went down on the other side, the Hungarians didn't even hear us coming because they were so busy roping and shooting, and we stood on the left way over, we had doctors and nurses in big cars and then we had people outside to pull us out. Four of us, three men and me, we jumped and thanks to the ice, the ropes hang on to it, and saved people out, but only 50, and then we were so frozen that we couldn't do it anymore. But without Raoul Wallenberg, we wouldn't

have saved even one single person. And, you know, when 40 or almost 50 years going, sometimes you think, "Do I dream this? Did it really happen?" Until last year, I spoke in New Jersey, and I told them the Wallenberg story and an old gentleman got up and he said, "Young lady, hold it right there. Do you see this little hole?" And I said "Yes, sir." He said, "That's where the bullet hit me, and you pulled me out." And I looked at him, I said, "No I didn't." He says, "Yes, you were the only girl because we met you after in the hospital." And it was, I was shaken up terribly, but some of us, Raoul, uh Peranga had the same wonderful meeting one day when the Russians were in already, and they had the uprising, and some of the Jews escaped on boats. And he was already a consul in Vienna, and he suddenly thought, "Well, why don't I do what Raoul did and help people out of the water." And he went down just with a little flashlight, and helped people out. One lady came off and saw him and run to him and said, "Mr. Peranga, you saved me from the Nazis, now you saving me from the Russians." Well, you see, we wouldn't recognize those people, but they knew us because we were so few, but it is a wonderful feeling that because of Raoul we could done these things, and that his very last and huge, and this argument I have with many people, they say "Ah, he probably saved 5000 people." That is absolutely ridiculous because by that time we had a real ghetto, and it was surrounded by the Hunga--all the proper houses around the main synagogue of Budapest, and there were 70000 people in there. And the Russians were already at the outskirts of Budapest, and Eichmann decided that this is the time that he should kill everyone. And he ordered to have the 70000 people killed. And how we found out is some of these Hungarian Nazis, they wanted to help Raoul because they knew that the war is over, and he was like me too--"Oh yes, I promise I help you." Okay, but they came and one of them.....Sorry.

beep

Q: I want you to go back to the beginning of the 70,000 story, so I want you to start with when people speculate about how many were saved.

A: All right. So, uh we had this beautiful, beautiful, uh, synagogue, and houses around it became the ghetto. 70,000 people were pushed in there. The only thing it was that uh, the Swedish government went in at least twice a week to deliver some food and medication. And, uh, this one

morning, one of the Hungarian officers who already thought that Raoul will help him after, and the Soviet comes in, said, "Raoul, Eichmann just ordered to kill the 70,000 people in the ghetto. And the guns are already standing there." Raoul without batting an eye said, "Oh boy, and we have 2 of our Swedish girls in there now. They just delivered the medication. Go back to your headquarters and tell them the Germans have called off the...killing." And then he looked at us all waiting in the office, and he said, "Listen to me what I'm going to do," because he was always full of ideas, and dangerous ideas because he could have been killed. He picks up the phone and he dials the German headquarters, and he says, "I want to speak to General Schmitthuber in beautiful Germany. This is Lieutenant Kraus." So who dares to tell a Lieutenant Kraus that he can't speak to the General. The General came to the phone, and Raoul introduces himself again, he says, "Raoul Wallenberg." Well, he couldn't hang up on him. And Raoul said, "I don't understand what you are doing. I understand you are a highly decorated first world war general. How can you take it on your heart to kill 70,000 innocent people, whereby he must have answered, "Eichmann ordered it." Now, Eichmann could have been standing right by the General, but Raoul had to try, and he starts laughing, and he looks at us, and do like this and that with his eye. He said, "Eichmann told you? Didn't you know that he left town? I had lunch with him yesterday." Which was of course a lie. Whereby the man answered, "I didn't know." So Raoul said to him in not simple words that, "If you don't call off the killing immediately, I as a diplomat will be sure that you will be the first one hanged before your office." Within 2 minutes he called off the killing, and therefore, the 70,000 people plus the 2 Swedish girls have been saved. So if he wouldn't have done anything more than that, that would have been enough, didn't it? But he did not. And, uh, that was that, and then as you know maybe before that we also had...

beep.

Q: All right, let's go on from there into another story. You want to do having Eichmann for dinner?

A: Oh yeah, that was a wonderful thing. One day he decided he invites Eichmann to dinner, but he was so busy he completely and wholly forgot about it. So frantically, he called other diplomats, "Do you have any food? Do you have any drinks? I forgot I invited Eichmann. so they decided that they will go to another consul's place uh, uh, no he was then also third secretary Burg, and uh,

Raoul has been of course as usual just with an open shirt, very relaxed and the little man Eichmann arrived with about 7 or 8 guns around him, and two men. And, uh, they had a very pleasant dinner, and they had a very pleasant uh, uh drinks there, and Raoul turned to him suddenly and he said, "Look, Eichmann, I think what you're doing is crazy. You know that the Germans lost the war." Now, we were by candlelight. Of course, they were, and he went to the window and pulled up the shade, and right then they were bombing Budapest like...terribly. And he says, "Look the whole beautiful city is burning. So give up your idea of killing the Jews because you, you will be killed anyhow." And Eichmann's answer was, "I know that if they catch me I will be killed, but I took it to my head to kill everybody, and I will, but you're disturbing me." Whereby Raoul looked at him, he says, "I don't disturb you enough." And he said, "But, Mr. Wallenberg, don't forget, just a diplomatic passport doesn't really help. Diplomats are dying too." And sure enough, in a few weeks after, a big heavy truck rammed into Raoul's car, but thanks God Raoul wasn't in it, and Raoul picked up the phone and screamed at Eichmann, "You ruined my best car!" Whereby he answered, "I wanted to kill you." He said, "That's not so easy to kill me." He wasn't afraid. The only thing he was afraid, yes, it was the bombing because there he couldn't do a thing. And that, too, you know, we had two orphanages, did you know that? That he had 2 orphanages. And in one of them there was 79 children, and they were so frightened when it was bombing, and so was Raoul. But instead of being afraid then, he picked up the children, and he started to tell them stories, and he would, uh, imitate little animals, so that the children forgot to be afraid. And that was the most wonderful thing to see how he cared for these kids, and they called him Uncle Raoul. And this was his greatest and most horrible heartache, when one day he arrived home, because we had these safe houses, what they called the International Ghetto, what it wasn't, it was given to us and not bought, by Christians and Jews who didn't wanted their houses and villas on both sides of the Danube to fall in Russian, in uh, German hands. And they gave that to Raoul, and so immediately these people with these passes were put in there, even if they were not comfortable, but at least they had Raoul Wallenberg who came out twice a week, and there was medication and there was food. Otherwise, they were frightened and -----, but it was taken care of by young Aryan looking Jewish boys, who were dressed up in Nazi uniform, and so was one of this uh, wonderful orphanages. And one day, Raoul arrived, he has always visited the orphanage, and he found all the children killed, and the young guard from outside could tell the story because he was hit in the shoulder, that these young punks came in and just started to shoot the kids. Well, one

little boy went under the chair because when he thought that he sees his mother last, the mother says, "If anything happens just try to hide." He went under the chair, and when it was all over, he climbed out and he went out in the street, and the first person he met was his mother, who was by then in a Raoul Wallenberg safe house. He is also in this country today, and the other one who survived was a woman whom I hoped you already interviewed, she is now professor of humanities and English in Mercer college in NJ: Dr. Vera Goodkin. She has been saved twice by Raoul. The second time she had scarlet fever, and she was in the orphanage, and Raoul had to give her some false papers, and she was in a hospital, that's why she wasn't killed. So these two people, and that was the only time I ever saw Raoul Wallenberg go down on his knees and cry bitterly. Because killing children was something he could have ever imagined that anyone can do. But then he got up again, and he was as tall as 7 foot, and he said, "I am fighting on because I want to save the young. Because the young are going to make peace." That was his idea. And, uh, in anything, uh, there was a young man who was then about 15, and his mother was taken, and they were crying. And he is today, he is a television and newspaper man in Israel, Teddy Lapin, I think is his name, if I remember, and he cried very bitterly when his mother gone, and in about an hour, suddenly, his mother arrived back with all the other women. And when they looked at each other, the mother, all she could say is, was "Wallenberg." And what happened, he heard about it that they taking women from, they came in through the basement, and they just carried people out. And they went to the Danube to kill them all, and suddenly, the car arrives, and this one man in a coat and hat, they already knew that must be Wallenberg, demanded that these are my people, and I, they are under my protection, and you Germans have absolutely no right to take them, and he brought them back home. So he was again with his mother. And he did thousands and thousands of things, and never, never, ever thinking that he shouldn't do it. And now you really thought that he has done everything. Now there was the Russians coming in, and everybody told him, "Raoul, don't go anywhere." But he said, "Yes, I want to go to the Russian headquarters because we need help for the people we saved." Now, there is a lot of stories about how he disappeared, but the real story I heard from the Swedish Red Cross man who was still in Budapest, and I met him later on.

CR-6, Sync tape 7 is up.

beep.

Q: I want to go back, and I want you to explain to me what the shutzpass was--what it was, how he did it, and how big an endeavor it was. Remember that I have never heard of it before.

A: All right. Um, as I told you before, that the first eighty of these real passes, passports were given out, and Raoul was very annoyed. He said, "That, that's not enough, and we have 280,000 people to save." And he said, "I want to go to the Hungarian headquarters and talk to them." So he went to these Nazi people and he offered them to take the Jews off their hand because they still could have trains going through Germany into Sweden, and he said, "I put up big railroads, and I just take them all out." And uh, the Hungarians said, "Oh, that's wonderful, you can take 5,000 people. So, he tipped his hat and said, "Thank you." and came home and he said, "5,000 people, that's ridiculous. They will never allow us any other, and he sat down, as he was a great draftsman and architect, and he has uh, designed a paper in the Swedish colors, yellow and blue, with the Swedish crowns there, and he explained that uh, what we will write on it, and I already once translated it word by word to the New York Times, and yet they put it down all wrong. It says exactly that the bearer of this shutzpass or this protective pass, and the picture was up there with the person's signature, is protected by the Swedish government and when and if we can go in a collective passport to Sweden after 2 wks, this paper will be invalid. That's all what it says, in German and in Hungarian, and yet you constantly, this was a passport, the people were Swedish citizens, no. So, he went with this beautiful paper with the Swedish uh, crown, the stamps on it from the Swedish Embassy, and each of them were signed by the ambassador, not by Raoul Wallenberg, because that too, they said, this was all fake, and they were no good. It's not true, it wasn't fake. It was real. And with this paper, he went back to the Hungarians, and they said, "All right, you can make out about 15,000. Well, of course, we made out 30 to 40,000 of these, and people came up to the embassy by the embassy by the thousands to bring their pictures to put on and to, to. Now, thousands and thousands of people, yes, have been saved. How much money Raoul gave the Germans, we don't know, but he blew them up as big as the wall on the streets. And it said that anybody who has these papers should be left uh, uh free. Now, my 2 girlfriends whom I told you uh came after uh being early morning there to report, uh the German officer must have heard that they had a German accent because they had a Hungarian father, but they went back to Germany after he died. And he said them in German, "You know what you can do with the

paper." But, the 2 girls turn around and run and he never shot after them. So, they knew, the Hungarians were sort of different. They did that with my father, who was there when the girls arrived, and he cried bitterly because he loved them like his own, and he said, "I can't see all this crying anymore," so on his pajamas he put on his winter coat, and he said, "I'm going down to buy bread." Within a 1/2 an hour, we got a little note what he scribbled, and gave it to someone, that he is a Hungarian prison. So, right away, I called Raoul, he was about going somewhere else, but he sent 2 diplomats with his car, and we went to look after my father all day, and we never found him. Next day, they came very early morning around 5:30 and we went again. finally, we came to a huge big sports palace, and the 2 diplomats go in and I see them saying, "Heil Hitler!" and they running back and they said, "Your father is home!" Do we have a phone? I said, "yes." So, we called home and papa was home and he told us what happened. He went down, he had the pass in his pocket, and this Hungarian punk came up, he says, "Hey, you Jew, show me your paper. And Papa pulled it out, and they said what he can do with it, and took him into the prison. A German officer walked in -- my father spoke perfect German, so he showed it to him, he threw him out. This went on about 20 times that they, the Hungarian took him back, the German let him out. Finally, the Hungarians warned and marched them for 8 hours to all the outskirts to the Sports Palace. They stood there all night, Papa with his bread, and, uh, finally in the morning, two German officers came, and they were telling each other some jokes, and they laughed, and my father thought, "Good, this is the moment I can talk to them." And he walked up and he said, "Look what the Hungarians did to me!" and he was thrown out. And before that, he gave his bread to an old man, and besides him was a young man, he also had same paper, and he was thrown out, and this time Papi made it all the way home. So, whether, again, whether Raoul bribed the Germans to do this, not every German did, but the Hungarians absolutely didn't care. Now, the fake came in very easily because there was a polish gentleman who saved people for 2 yrs, a Polish Jew in Poland, and when he was finished, he figured somehow he makes his way to Hungary, maybe he can help because by that time he knew we were occupied. And he had a tiny little printing machine, and he found out there was an angel in Budapest who's doing this. Now, Mr. Danielson's handwriting was very easy to fake, and he started to make these pass, passes, and he gave it out to people, and Raoul got wind of it, and met him and first very angrily he said, "How dare you are doing this because we can get in big trouble." And then, he put on his big smile, he said, "But, if you can save one human life, go ahead and do it." So, we had the feeling that maybe

another hundred thousand people got saved with the fake paper. Because it was just the idea 'save the people'. And, we did as much as we could, and of course, many people died with the same paper too because the Hungarians don't care. So, it, it was a very exciting time, and, and uh, naturally the only thing, what was really needed was the real ambassador's handwriting on each of them. He was with us. He didn't like to do it, but he had to do it because Raoul make him do it. And Raoul never signed those papers. What Raoul signed was our working papers, what you probably can see here, that was his handwriting. And, uh, he was just wonderful, and that too, we were told all the time now, here, that they didn't believe it. "Oh, this working paper saved her life." No it didn't because in that time everyone, even a shoe shiner in Budapest had to have a working paper because you could not just go around, whether you were Christian or Jewish. And many people got, died with this paper, and many people, as I was lucky, I lived with this paper.

Q: Now, I want you to tell me the story about the Danube again, but I don't want you to refer back to telling it to me before, and I don't want you to talk about coming in like a teddy bear. I want you to tell it as though I've never heard it before, never met you before.

A: All right. So, they, it was the coldest winter in Budapest for already uh, since beginning of October. So much so that the Danube was frozen with huge big slabs of ice. And this Hungarian Nazi party decided that the best way to kill people was to take them down on the side of the Danube in a dark night and rope 3 together and shoot them into the Danube. And they did that, it was no moonlight, no stars, it was just a very black night. And Raoul wasn't around for 2 days. He was somewhere else saving people, and when he came home, he heard this and he was besides himself. "What will Eichmann think next?!" And he turned around to us this time and he said, "How many of you can swim?" So I put my hand up, and I said, "I can," and we went down together to the Danube. We were all dressed in our winter coats and hats and boots and every time the Hungarians shot, 4 of us, there was 3 men and myself. We fell in, into the Danube at the same time, and thank you for the big icicles, the ropes hung on to the icicle and we knew where there is a rope there is a body, and we pulled the people out, and the, the Red Cross trucks were waiting with hot soup and change of clothes and there were doctors and nurses, and then we went to our hospital. But we only saved about 50 people because then we were so frozen that we didn't know whether we going forward or backwards. But 50 people without Raoul Wallenberg could not have

been saved. But because of him, we did save those 50 people, and I was lucky enough to, to meet someone a few years after who was in Nj and he asked me if I saw the hole in his finger, and I said yes and he said that's where the bullet hit me, but you pulled me out, and I said, "I didn't." He said, "Yeah, you were the only girl, we met you after in the hospital." So, it was a very good feeling. Is that what you wants to know?

Beep

Q: Now I want to go back, and I want you to tell me what you think happened to Raoul.

A: Well, what happened to Raoul Wallenberg, as I probably told you that, uh, he wanted to help the people whom he helped already, and he figured the, the Soviet is our allies, so we have to go to them to get some help, and everybody told him not to do it, because, let's wait how the Soviets will be with us, the embassy said, but Raoul said, "No, no, no. I have to go and I have a 5 year plan--for the Soviet how to help these people to get back they homes, and how we feed them, and we need medication." So nobody could talk, and he went with his driver, Wilmer Schlangfelder, together, and they went through that little city called Debretzing, that was the headquarter of the Soviets. In a week, he came back, and that's how I know the story, because the Red Cross had--the Swedish Red Cross had--I met later on in Sweden, and he said Raoul came back, and behind him there were two Russian officers on motorbikes, and he said, "As you can see, I have some Russians behind me and I am invited back, and I have no idea if I am invited back as a visitor or as a prisoner. But, he said, "I had a wonderful meeting on the way back. I saw a, an old lady carrying bread in a basket, and she still had a star on, and I got out of the car, and I went over, and I said How wonderful to see that somebody is alive, my name is Raoul Wallenberg, and the lady pulled out the Schutzpass. She says, 'I know, I got one of your paper.'" And he said it was a very emotional moment for him too, and then he emptied his pockets, and he said to Mr. Langfelder, who was the head of the red cross, and he said, "Here, I give you all the money and all the diamonds because you will need it to feed the people whom we saved, but I keep a thousand dollars," and I tell you that because in a few minutes I tell you what happened to the thousand dollars. He said, "I keep this just in case my trip takes long." And then he said "Goodbye" and disappeared. Now, in 1945, the mother in Stockholm got a phone call from the Russian ambassador Mrs. Colontery, telling her not to worry

about Raoul. Raoul is in uh...not captivity, they, she said, he, he is in Russia, and we are taking care of him. So the mother was very happy. But Mrs. Colontery wasn't happy because every day she got phone calls, and she kept on saying, "You better don't ask so much. He is all right. We protecting him." But after a little while, Mrs. Colontery was called back, and miraculously she died in a heart attack in Volta. And then they started to ask where is Raoul. In the meantime, the whole embassy got back to uh, Stockholm, and I arrived to Stockholm in 1945, and I said, "Where is Raoul?" and they said, "We don't know." They knew nothing about Raoul. And the Russian answer was that we never heard of him. He is not there. In '47, however, suddenly they said that yes, he was there, and he Ulanka prison, he died in a heart attack. The heart attack they described is for a big fat man, and Raoul Wallenberg was really not fat, and besides, I'm sure he didn't get hurt in prison. So, they ask for the autopsy papers, and they disappeared. They ask for the doctor--he wasn't alive anymore, so we knew that they lying. Then, as you know, in '57, Mr. Gromyko said that, uh, he's very sorry, but, yes, he's dead, and that's that. Now, the terrible thing is that we know now and we can't imagine why. I told you before that Stockholm was sort of a spy center, and this Mr. Olson what even we didn't know, and I'm sure that Raoul had no idea, that he worked for the OSS. And when Raoul told the Russians that he was paid by the Americans, they must have had people in Stockholm to see him sitting with Mr. Olson, whom the Russians knew very well who he was. So they said, "Aha, Raoul Wallenberg is a spy." They also came up with stories what is not true--that Raoul once flew back home to Sweden and while he was there, and he discussed things with the Germans what was an absolute lie. He could not, the only person who ever went back was Peranga because his wife was pregnant, and the last train going, he went with her, and also a lady with her 2 little boys who was hidden with me--they went, and then ----- came back, and then they closed the curtain. That was it. Raoul never left, so he was not a spy, but the Russians took it in their head that he was an American spy, and also they didn't like the Jews more than the Nazis, so why this spy goes to Hungary to save the Jews--this was to save, uh, so, we don't know, as Mr. Wiesenthal said, "The Russian mind--the Soviet mind," he said that time, "is, is, is something you don't know what they thinking." And then, the whole world really just didn't care about him. His own country didn't care. And I remember how people did not believe. In 1945, September, I was already in Switzerland, and I was so excited to tell that story because that wasn't a sorrowful story, this was a wonderful story, and my own family, my uncle, who was a very prominent gentleman--he turned to my aunt when he thought I don't hear, and he said, "You better take this child to a

psychiatrist, she's lying through her teeth. She's coming up with stories what happened not true." And I was hurt. And every time the phone rang, and my uncle gave it to me, and he said, "Oh, this must be the Russian, oh, the uh, the Swedish Ambassador." And they were very surprised when finally the Norwegian Ambassador called, and said that there was a Red Cross tank, uh, truck, what are going to take me and many other people away, and it was, I talked to newspaper people, and they thought I was lying--such a person didn't exist. Then, when I arrived to Sweden, I thought, "Well, now I can talk about Raoul." Nobody wanted to hear it. I was a lecturer in the camps with Count Bernodoch, who was also killed, unfortunately. Count Bernodoch brought these very, very sick people in from Bergen-Belsen from Auschwitz, from Treblinka, you name it, those who were still alive, he opened the most beautiful sanatoriums and schools to have these people. And I asked permission if I at least there can talk, at least to the Hungarians about Raoul Wallenberg. Well, they gave me the permission to do that. And nobody listened. Absolutely didn't wanted to listen. To the story. And I didn't know what happened to Raoul, and I, but then everybody was scared from the Russians. Everybody was learning Russian in Sweden--it was the only country there, it was the only country there, and it looked like the Russians will run them over any moment. So I wanted to get out, I had enough from the Nazis and the Russians. I brought my parents out, and they were in Sweden, and I went to Australia because they didn't let me in here. And, there I tried to talk about Raoul, and there some people listened. But, still, nothing happened. Then, I came over here, and nobody did anything. Finally, in the beginning in '80, there was Congressman Lantosh, who started to look for Raoul Wallenberg. He had his wife, and I told you that his wife was my little student back in Hungary, but I didn't know that until 40 after that's her. And, then, they started to listen. My husband, whom I married in '60, we went on a 3 week honeymoon, and I told him the story and he was crying for 3 weeks. He was the only one who ever listened. And from then on, we are trying and trying, and nothing happened. Now, they're working on it. And why I brought the thousand dollar up for you--two years ago was the first time that his half sister and half brother was invited to go to Russia, and help them look for Raoul Wallenberg. Before they arrived there, the Russian television, what is like our Good Morning America, but it's only on Saturday goes out to something like 50 million people. They suddenly had Raoul Wallenberg's picture on the screen, and the phone number under it, and it said, Anyone who has any information about this person, gave his name, please call these nos. And every five minutes they showed that. The Swedish embassy was absolutely besides themselves, and from then on, they cared. They

suddenly allowed to talk about Raoul Wallenberg. They renamed the only burn center in Leningrad--they renamed it the Raoul Wallenberg Medical Center. They now have documentaries, they have films, they have books, they came out with everything, and then they invited Gee and Nina, and they took Peranga with them, because after all, Per was the nearest one working with Raoul, and also they have a secretary who called Sonya Sonenfeld, who is Russian born, and they took her so that nobody can cheat when they talking Russian. Sakharrov was still alive, so he offered the family to help because he speaks English and he speaks Russian. And the first question...

beep.

A: Okay, so uh, the family arrived, and uh, there was tremendous crowd already at the airport from the whole world, all the newspaper came because this was really the first time that they allowed them to come. And they went first to the Swedish Embassy, and then, they went to a part of where the KGB is, and Sakharrov went with them everywhere. The KGB's question was from Sakharrov, "How do we find--where do we start?" They had no idea to these KGB, they are also all young people. So Sakharrov said, "As far as I know, there is a key, what opens a big vault, a huge vault in the Kremlin. When you find the key, and you open it, you will find little sacks, and on each of them, the people's names. You will find Wallenberg. They found it. They brought out, and what they give back to the family was Raoul's passport, Raoul's personal papers, and the thousand dollars. That's why I mentioned the thousand dollars before--they didn't even take that away from him, and in 1945 that was a lot of money. But that thousand dollars was with him. Now, what the KGB man did, he wrote out a receipt and he wanted Nina to sign it, and Sakharrov got very angry. He said, "Hey, wait a minute. You arresting a man without any reason. You keep him in prison for 46 years, and you want a receipt?!" So the KGB man said, "Sorry," and took the receipt and just gave everything back. And now we have an international committee in there, including two uh, humanitarian Russians, uh we have a Canadian professor, a mathematics professor from Toronto. We have, and I'm sure you heard his name, Dr. Martin Mackinin. That was the young man who was taken in prison in Russia when Powell was there, remember Powell? And they exchanged them--he went to, and then Powell came out. Two years he was in prison, he did nothing, he went to visit Moscow, but they said he was a spy. But, today he's a professor in Chicago, and he is one

of the men who is on this committee. And, uh, they found out fantastic things. #1: Every Russian citizen is now allowed to look for their dead person. It was written they are also dead like Raoul. Now by the thousands they walking home. The dead people walking home. So nobody believed that Raoul is dead. somewhere he must be alive. They established absolutely for sure that he was never cremated because they have one crematorium in the whole Soviet Union or Russia today, and their paper is as long as from here to Manhattan, and that took about 4 months to go through all the names, it's like a long toilet paper, Raoul Wallenberg's name is nowhere on. So he was not cremated. If he was killed, they must find somewhere his bones. That's how they found these Polish officers--they opened one, they thought Raoul is there, they found all those Polish officers. So we don't give up. He must be somewhere. And as you know, this August he will be 80 year old. And we want to make this year a Raoul Wallenberg international humanitarian year. And this idea comes from a lady whose name is Dr. Vera Permish, who is Russian. Who is a doctor of neurosurgery, who wrote lots and lots of papers, and she never heard of Raoul Wallenberg until 2 yrs ago, and he made a Wallenberg committee and he also has a museum, and he is in this country now medically and not medically and now she doesn't have to rush back, but when she came out it was still a communist country--now it's free. And she is trying to ask the whole world for sending poems, essays, paintings, songs, anything what can make Raoul happy.

Q: Let me ask you something generally. How important are heroes? And how important are heroes in connection with the Holocaust?

A: Very, very, very important. Especially for our American youth, as you know, we do not have any heroes. Because I don't believe that the great sports figures are heroes. They can be idols, but they're certainly not heroes. A hero is a man who does something for humanity without getting paid for it, and there are very few. And I think I could name just a few who were like Raoul Wallenberg. And these heroes are important, because the whole youth of the world don't see the importance of being wonderful and caring people, and the only way they can learn when they listen to these stories about Wallenberg. I know I had the experience what children can do when they realize what one single person can do. If you're interested I can tell you two wonderful stories. The one was, we have the Raoul Wallenberg school, a public school in Brooklyn. And, uh, one little boy is all, well, most of them are already in Junior high school. Two years ago I was invited to see Fiddler on the Roof. The teacher called me, she says, "It's all Wallenberg children from the school are playing it." And there was one little boy who was 2 hrs, he was Tabia. He sang, he ad-libbed, he spoke Hebrew, he did everything, he was absolutely magnificent. 2 hours non-stop. And when it was over, I knew I remembered something of the boy, but I didn't know what, so when the teacher called me, she said, "You remember Johnny?" and I said, "I do," but what do I remember. Well, I said, "First of all the boy is a Christian, and look how beautiful he speaks Hebrew. The secondly is he has a terrible asthma condition, and when he said to me, "Mrs. Shapiro, I want to be Tabia," I didn't know how to answer him and I said but, "What's going to happen Johnny if you get a coughing fit?" And he said, "Agi,"--the kid was like Wallenberg, he was not 4 ft, he was 7 ft, and he looked at me, he said, "If Raoul Wallenberg could do what he did, I can do it." You see what a mind, and if you can tell the children the right way--what it means to be a person who cares--he wanted to make other people so for 2 years, he never coughed for 2 hrs. The other one happened when I was a school librarian in another public school, and in the last 1/2 hour of the day, the teacher came up with a class, and he said, "I can do nothing with these kids, maybe you tell them the Wallenberg story." So I did. And when the bell went, everybody just sat there, and the teacher said, "Don't you kids want to go home?" And they said, "No, could Mrs. Adachi talk a little longer?" So, I said, "If you don't hurry, I don't hurry." And I told them that

getting involved doesn't mean if two people on the street killing each other, that you go in the middle, because you get killed. But use your noodles like Raoul used to. What can I do immediately? Okay, they went, I forgot about the story, 3 weeks after I am sitting security at lunch time. Suddenly I see one little boy coming in, takes my pencil and paper, the other one comes in hands it to the secretary, and I said, "What's going on?" The secretary I hear calling the police. And before the Principal walks out, I can hear the police arriving. Suddenly 3 kids come in from this class, they're all 6th graders. One is scratched, his shirt is all torn, I said, "What happened?!" Well, the ball, they were playing ball, the ball went out in the street, the boy went out to the street to pick up the ball and there was a log, and he wants to pick up the log, when a car comes and a man opens the window, and he said, "Leave that log there!" And the kid like you would do or I would do put up his shoulder, and he says, "OK!" For this okay, the man came out of the car, and brutally started to hit him because he answered back. Now what are my children doing? He came in, he picked up the paper and the pencil, he put down the license number, the other one run in and gave it to the thing. By the time, as I said, the principal went out, the man was arrested. Stolen car, crazy man, and then all 3 kids look at me, they said, "Would Wallenberg be proud of us?" So you see, I am sure that these 3 kids, whenever they will go out anywhere, and they are now high school, or maybe already in college, they will never do anything wrong. They will always look, "How can I help other people?" And that's why, uh, my committee is every year giving senior high school students Raoul Wallenberg humanitarian awards. I don't want a child who has high grades. I don't care what they do in school. I want to know what they have done 4 yrs outside the school. And you'd be surprised the most magnificent things these children do. Looking after AIDS children. These are 16, 17 year old kids. They are going to nursing homes, they reading to people, they, they doing the most fascinating things. They walking blind people. They, they--it is wonderful, I wish I could give them instead of just a frame, something, I could give them at least 100 dollars but I don't have the money. But, there again, I know that these children look for that every year, who can be the best, and they do work 4 yrs. That is the importance of a hero if you ask me.

beep

Q: I want you to tell me what it feels like to have been a rescuer, and what it felt like then to be

involved in this.

A: I'd be glad to.

Q: For you personally, not for Raoul. For you.

A: Well, I, when I was that young, and I had someone like Raoul Wallenberg, it was nothing, it was a natural thing, like it must have been for him. It, it was a wonderful feeling that I could save my parents, that I could save my cousins. Again, it was a miracle because, as I said, many people with the same papers died, but we were lucky, but it was a tremendous feeling to be there and be able to do something. I didn't know the meaning, I just knew that now I have the power to do it. And I did it. And, because I was young, and because I wanted to live so badly, because the life was so short then, and we haven't lived yet. So it was so important to be able to be doing this, and it was the most fantastic feeling, that you know that you can hold somebody's hand, and that you saved it, like a friend of mine trusted me with her child once, and that was when the Russians were already in, but they were still fighting. The Germans went to Buda's side, and from Buda they were shooting, and my friends came to me, and they said, "Would you take our little girl to the nuns?" And here we were, walking on the streets where they were shooting, and the little girl was so frightened and I said, "Well, what did Raoul do? He said, "stories," so I started the children's story, and in the meantime we ducked, and somehow we survived, and I took the children, the child to the nuns, and next day the parents went back, and under the window they brought her out, but you never thought of being afraid because that was the strength, that was the most wonderful feeling that you can do something. You never thought of it that you get uh, paid for it, or praised for it, it was a natural thing. But, sometimes it was a horrifying too, like when, as I said, they were already bombing, uh, or I mean uh shooting each other, and uh, we had shortage of water, and I remember that uh, two houses from us, there were a courtyard, and they had a uh, a uh, uh, what you call it a...

Q: A well.

A: A well, thank you. Sometimes I don't come to the words. And I wanted my father to be shaved

so I went down to get the water, and uh, again, who cares what's coming around you, don't hear it really, you know, only the last minute, a shhhhhhhh, and there was an old gentleman who came out of the house, and up there was his wife, and waiting, and he came with the water, and suddenly, we heard this, and the man besides me fell. And I was so shocked, why not me, why him? And he was killed right there before my eyes. And yet, I had to go on, and his wife came down, there was, we couldn't really stop, and I brought the water home, and I couldn't tell my parents because I was shaking, but then you had to go again, you know, and again, and, and, and, you had to save a child here, a child there, even when the Russians were in already. Now, today, it is a far more difficult thing, it upsets me much more. Why was I so...strong? Why didn't I do it? Or, how dare I was to do it rather, that's a question. But, I always come back to the same answer, because we had such a wonderful hero, who wouldn't like it today if somebody would call him a hero. He was just a regular young man, but he was full of pranks and jokes, but he gave us that enormous strength, and I'm trying today, even if I couldn't do such things anymore as jumping to the cold water--eh, today if I just see cold water, I get frozen, that's why maybe I always need the boots, but, what you have to go on teaching our children to be that strong, and that caring, and that their eyes should be open, what they can do to others, without prejudice, what also Raoul Wallenberg taught us. And I think I took that over, and I, I will always do it, and I, I, I am proud of it if I can. I know my children had lots of wonderful black friends who slept over in my house, and they all became lawyers and doctors and, and whatever, they great kids, and my neighbor, who unfortunately came out with a terrible word, she's an Arab Jew from Persia, and she came out she says, "Why do you let that nigger into your house?" And I looked at her, I said, "You of all people, asking me this?" And I said, "Besides, I don't see they color." And then when I was at my door, I turned around and I said, "It's interesting enough, they put their slacks on the same way as my sons, and I banged the door." But this all what we have, that's what Raoul said to us, he always talked about, "I want to save the young, because only the young can make peace." And finally, once while we were waiting for a Red Cross truck, I asked him, I says, "Raoul, explain, I am young. What do you want us young people to do?" Not that he was so much older--ten years or something, and he said, "Oh, Agi, it's so easy, prejudice has to disappear. In my book, I am color blind, I am religious blind, I only know two kinds of people, the good and the bad. And if you good, try to make the bad better." That was all he said. But his dream was always that one day all the children will come out and hold hands.

But you see we can't do this unless we teach our children. Two years ago I was invited to Brooklyn in a junior high school. The principal called me and he said, "Now, Agnes, I want you to know we have 99% black children, the rest of it is kids in wheelchairs, Jews and Orientals. I said, "Fine. Can I speak of all Holocaust?" He said, "What all Holocaust?" I said, "Well, don't you know what they're doing in Africa? What happens in Central America? What happened to the 3 million people who Hitler killed besides the 6 million Jews?" Well, he didn't know. I says, "Can I or can I not talk?" He said, "Yes, You can." Okay. Now what I didn't know that he invited the whole ward--Ward 22. And when uh, the kids were wonderful, 300 of them in a huge big auditorium, and everybody looked at me, and then, uh, when I was finished with the story, nobody moved, the kids were wonderful. And then I asked the black children, "Do you know about the Ku Klux Klan?" Blank. And then I looked back at the board, and everybody pulls up the shoulder. I, I thought that's terrible. Then I looked at the little Jewish kids whom I thought, I said, "Did you hear about neo-Nazis?" Blank. So, I explained to the kids that they are both very bad people, and they are against us all, and if you kids don't look out for each other, then we all perish, but you can do it together. You can all do it together, and you can love each other, and forget colors, religions, anything. You will have to be just standing up very proud. And suddenly I see a black and a white kid, hugging, two boys, holding their hands, and then, suddenly the 300 kids got up and gave me a standing ovation, and I cried. And the board says they had never seen this, I says, "What is with you people? You teach nothing. Absolutely nothing. You come to the Holocaust, and you say that many people were killed, and how they were killed--children are not interested that way. But teach them who else is out there. And if, if they don't look out for each other, they all get killed, because they're black and because they're Jewish, and the little boy in the wheelchair came up and said, "Ms. Adachi, will you come to my ballgame, I am great in playing." I said, "Of course." And you see, this what, I am getting too old and I wish a lot of young people would go out and talk to the children, I'm asking children to talk to other kids, to tell them that we are all one, and especially Junior high school kids, they already thinking themselves they have a mind. The parents tell them don't talk to him because he is this and don't talk to him because he's that. And that's no good and that was not Raoul Wallenberg's dream. But, I think we do reach a lot of children, and if we don't reach more than five kids in every class, in every school, then there is five better children in the world. And I think it's so important. And I, I, I'm going to meet by chance this Hungarian

ambassador to the United Nations, and we ask him to try to have the U.N. accept this year as Raoul Wallenberg humanitarian year. And help us to read those poems, grown-ups and children will write, or have a beautiful symphonic poetry, what is written by an American com, uh, American playwright, and a Swedish composer. They should play that because it's for Raoul. We're also trying to build a very great, the first in the world Raoul Wallenberg Center for the Arts in Florida. What we already started many years ago, and then all our money was stolen, I want to get into that, but these things happen, but now the Senate wants to help. So, this would be one of the greatest 80th birthday presents to Raoul Wallenberg.

Q: Would it....

beep.

Q: Okay. Tell it to me as though you didn't tell it to me before.

A: Well, you have to know that Raoul saved over 100,000 people, but many times, here in America especially, people say, Oh, don't tell me that, he didn't even save 5,000. Well, if he didn't do that, the very last act he had, he saved 70,000 people. So even if he didn't save anyone else, 70,000 would be quite enough. And how that happened is that the Nazis finally decided they have to make a big ghetto. And we have a very beautiful synagogue in the middle of Budapest, and all the houses around it became the ghetto. And they pushed 70,000 people in there. Now, uh, the only way we could get in there was that our Red Cross People, Swedish Red Cross, went in. Almost every week twice, and brought them some food and medication, and, see what had to be done. But otherwise we had not much connection, just try to take care of it, that people won't be taken. One day a Hungarian Nazi officer came to uh Raoul, who thought that maybe Raoul will help him after the Soviet occupation because the Soviet was already on the outskirts of Budapest. And said to him, "Raoul, Eichmann ordered to kill the 70,000 people in the uh ghetto, and uh, guns are already standing there. And Raoul said, "Oh my God! And our 2 Red Cross girls are just in there now! Go back to your headquarters and tell them that the Na, uh German headquarters called off the killing." The Hungarian left immediately, and Raoul looks at us, it was in the office, in the one of

the offices where we worked on that day, and he said, "Now listen to me what I'm going to do." And he picked up the phone, as he spoke beautiful German, and he called the German headquarters, and he said, "This is Lieutenant Kraus. I want to speak to the General." Naturally to Lieutenant Kraus, they give the General immediately. And when the General came to the phone, Raoul said, "This is Raoul Wallenberg." And uh, the man was surprised but he couldn't hang up, and Raoul said to him, "Uh, General, I do not understand what you're doing. I understand you are a very highly decorated first world war general. How can you take it on your heart and conscience to kill 70,000 innocent people plus my 2 Swedish Red Cross girls who are in there?" Whereby he must have answered, "Eichmann did it." Now how daring Raoul was. Eichmann could have stood right next door to the general, but how, Raoul know he had to think fast, and he said, "Eichmann?! Didn't you know Eichmann left town, I had lunch with him yesterday." Whereby the General said, "I didn't know that." So Raoul said, "All right, then you are responsible. And if you are not calling off the killing within 5 minutes, I as a Swedish diplomat tell you, you will be the first one hanging before your office as soon as the Russians reach us here in midtown." In 4 minutes, he called off the killing, and thereby he saved 70,000 people, plus the 2 girls from the Swedish Red Cross. That was Raoul Wallenberg.

Q: One more story that's in your other transcript was about the curfew and the little child who was out 1 minute after curfew, and a doctor who tried to help him. Remember that story? They were lined up and...

A: That was not my story.

Q: Okay, um, can you talk to me a little more about how hard it was to believe what was happening.

A: Yes, it was very hard. I don't if for everybody, but for me it was because I never knew cruelty, or because I also had a father who believed that everybody is equal, and it was a horror to see that our young life can be snatched out in one second, for what? Just because you were a Jew, or just because you were an anti-Nazi. It was a horrible feeling that you never know what happens the

next minute. And it was a very frightening thing to, to think, 'How can you get out of this? How can you, save yourself, and save someone else?' Well, of course, after Raoul, it was much easier because somehow he was the head and we were the body. But, before he came, uh, even in that 3 weeks, eh, in that heaven up at the Swedish Embassy, you were thinking, "Well, what's going to happen to my parents? How can I get them saved?" So the constant worry because we didn't know what these crazy people are doing, it was a horrifying time. And especially, as I said, because when you're so young, to think of it that what is in the future? Nothing. It's a very frightening feeling. It's an incredible feeling. What is very hard to explain, but the only help maybe was that that big radio I had, and that electricity was still on so that we could hear from those out of stations what's happening, and that always gave a hope of well, the allies won't let us down, and the allies will help, and the allies didn't help. So, it wasn't very easy. And I remember when we were down in the basement, when, when we had bombing and uh, they made it as a joke, but it wasn't. There was one old lady who constantly said "Oh my God, Oh my God, Where are they?" because they weren't bombing. And somebody said, "Well, why are you so worried that that they taking care of us?" And then suddenly the bombing started, and the old lady looked up and says, "Thank you Americans. Now you're here." She was relieved, but that's how we all felt, that the allies must be helping us. The allies must be there. And they weren't always there. And it was frightening that we didn't know that, that we had truly the whole Balkan was given away to the Soviets. We didn't know that. And we were not expecting the Soviets to liberate us. Maybe if the American liberated us, I could have never left Hungary. But, I did leave. So, and many, many other people were like that. And it wasn't easy. We had, uh, when I went back to our home, for instance, uh, when you went down to the basement when it was bombing, the faces were all new. Well, we only found out after the war that there were quite a few Jews there who had Christian papers, and that's how they survived. But there were also a very good-looking elderly gentleman with a younger son, and a mother, and a wife, and he always looked at me and I looked at him, and I had no idea who he could be, and then one day he asked me where I'm always going, and I don't know why I, I, I believed in the man so you come out and telling him. He said, "I wish I could go with you," and I said, "Well, who are you?" And it turned out he was the only Hungarian General who got away from the Germans, and he took some false papers, but he gave me his real name, General Gutweih, and he happened to come to our house and find an apt. His son committed suicide, thanks God

they put him back. And he was my ally, he had by that time the radio upstairs didn't work, but he had a little radio with batteries, and in that one we heard the BBC telling us that Rumania was already free, and it was occupied by British, French, uh, and uh the Russians, and then he was the one who one day run in and says, "Come out and see what's happening!" and we looked out by our port, big port door, and the German weapons were lying on the ground like this, he said, "The Russians must be in there." And then he and his son was the first one out. The Russians knew everything, they took them away, and we were so worried, and they came back after 3 days. The interrogation was incredible. Girls, uh military girls interviewed them with caviar and drinks for 3 days. Of course, they both threw their drinks over their shoulders, and they wanted to know whether they really are the person who they are, and they were not Nazis and all that. It was a frightening time, but he was a great ally for us and wonderful...and it, it, it was uh, a frightening time. It was a very frightening time.

End of Interview.