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Suzanne Foldes interview 2/9/95

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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 pants 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:

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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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