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Barna Kiss- Holocaust Rescuers Interviews

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Interview - Barna Kiss - Rescuer from Hungary

VALERIE We want to interview you so that we can learn what it is in you that allowed you to be so courageous--to have so much courage to save all those people.

MRS KISS He does not understand the word - courage; that he wasn't afraid? ...he said, it was natural...they take care of the people...one of them, the high, said to take care of these people because we need them for work. The other one who was over him on the front, he gave an opposite direction--to kill them; they are not people, they are animals, they are useless and they should be killed. That was two different orders what he get. He listened to this one that said to save them, and who was ahead of him. He was like this in the fight always because he didn't follow his orders...Understand that he was raised up in a very good family. His mother was Catholic, the father was Protestant. He was raised up it doesn't matter the religious; it matters what kind of person are you. Even in his childhood, he was connected with different kinds of religious children. When he go to the high school, he has Jewish friends--it wasn't any different between them.

Religion of parents

VALERIE What town were you born in? Did you grow up in?

MRS KISS In Debrecen.

VALERIE What year were you born?

MRS KISS He was born in 1912.

EVA Was it a small town?

MRS KISS The third biggest city.

VALERIE You say there were a lot of Jewish people there?

MRS KISS Yes.

MRS KISS He says, when in Russia was the pogroms, the Jewish came down from this side to this town...and they landed in this town in Debrecen. Many Jewish were there and grew up there...This town was always a mixed town with the Jewish and a good

VALERIE I gather you two knew each other when you were very very young?

MRS KISS ...We met in 1939 ...I lived in Czechoslovakia--the part that was occupied in 1938 by the Hungarians...and then in this town where I was living, Novzanky...

EVA Is this where you were born too?

MRS KISS Yes. And at this time he came for the Ministerium in the chemical department. In 1914 he get a letter from his boss that if you don't stop the friendship with the Jewish, then you will not fired but be transferred to other city...he have there very good friends, my father and me, so he sent a letter to them to resign...He went to Budapest. He was working as a salesman...Later he had a store...Every year he goes in the army...That was another thing. He had an offer from the army to be an active officer. But in this situation, he can't have connection with Jewish, of course. And he said, thank you, I don't want it...

VALERIE Were you involved in anything political in the community?

MRS KISS When he came home to Hungary in 1937, he didn't even know that Hitler exists...because he was on the ship.

EVA What year did you start on the ship?

MR KISS In '32.

VALERIE How did you first learn about Hitler?

MRS KISS He come home and they call him into the army...He was having lunch with the other officers and he heard that Hitler marched into Austria...

VALERIE From what you're saying, anti-Semitism wasn't new in Hungary. It was going on for a long time. Did it get worse for Jews? When did you first become aware of what was happening...

MRS KISS My parents live in a small town in 1940...it was impossible...they break our windows; they make swastikas on our walls, on the street, on our houses,

They moved to Budapest...then it came that the Jewish cannot have a car in 1940...

VALERIE What was your reaction to the restrictions? How did you feel?

EVA Your wife remembers the restriction of the car--what do you remember?

MRS KISS He says, in other cities in 1928 there was a fight in the college-- the first thing he remembers is they chased the Jewish out of the college...

EVA Was there discussion in your family between your mother and father about this incident in 1928?

MRS KISS He says No, because in his town there wasn't anything. They didn't discuss...in his town the newspaper write nothing about it - anti-Semitism... but he knew from the school...the teacher and the children talking...

VALERIE ...Did you go to church?

MRS KISS Yes he go to church--one Sunday with the mother, another Sunday with the father. There wasn't any problem about the religion. There were three children in the family--the girl followed the mother's religion, and the boys followed the father's religion...

VALERIE What kind of man was your father?

MRS KISS ...I don't know how to describe what his father was doing...he was the head of the people who were working on a farm. He was responsible. He wasn't the owner of it. He was the best man of the owner. He knows what is happening and what is to do...His father was a very wealthy man and his mother came from a very good family. In Hungary they name a street and library from this family ...His grandfather was college-educated too.

VALERIE What was his personality like? How would you describe him?

MRS KISS A very quiet man who was working just for his work, his family. He never drink. He don't smoke. He doesn't gamble, nothing. He like nature.

He like animals, flowers, kids.

EVA What would you say is the most important value that he taught you?

MRS KISS He had not too much connection with the children because he was a very busy man who wake up at 4:00 o'clock in the morning and was out at the farm the whole day...At this time they didn't have a car; they go with horse & buggy. When he came home, he just ate and take rest. The mother was the connection with the children and the nanny. Since he was 4 years old, there was a nanny in the house. Before she was a nun and a college-educated teacher...The best connection was with the nanny.

VALERIE How long did she stay?

MRS KISS She was 91 years old when she die. She stayed with the family.

VALERIE Was she Hungarian?

MRS KISS Yes.

VALERIE What was she like? What do you remember about her?

MRS KISS She was a wonderful woman--intelligent and very patient with the children, take care of them and teach them.

VALERIE What about your mother? What was she like?

BARNA KISS She many times was sick. When I born, she was very sick. STomach...

MRS KISS She was a teacher too, but she did not have to use it...He was in a bunker and a bomb hit him. He was one year in a hospital...Later on when the Second World War was coming, he get back the sickness so he was afraid of the bomb and the airplanes what was coming.

EVA What year was he hospitalize?

MRS KISS 1917.

VALERIE What was the most important thing your parents taught you?

EVA Any one thing that your mother taught you, or your father?

MRS KISS The first time he went as a sailor to the ship, his father ask him one thing...not join the Foreign Legion!

VALERIE Was your father, your parents, strict with you?

MRS KISS No, he say, nobody was strict; not his mother, not nanny, not nobody. Everything what he did, he wasn't punished. He was raised up very well...He was free. The maximum it was, they tell him--don't do that again.

VALERIE What was your personality like as a young man?

MRS KISS He was a type who like to go and live...When he was on the ship and they got into port, he was going out--amusing and looking; he likes gypsy music, a little bit to drink...He was interested in everything in the cities where they stopped...He was many times in Genoa...

VALERIE It sounds like you had a spirit of adventure--excitement?

MRS KISS Yes . But he say, not now!

EVA When you were younger, did you have a lot of friends?

MRS KISS He had a few friends...You mean really good friends. You can count on one hand.

EVA When you were on the ship, were you a leader?

MRS KISS No...He say, never, nowhere, not'even when he had a chance to do it... When he was the head of...and had a connection with the people at the time as a friend--not as an officer or a big shot. He was sitting down with them and talk with them--what is the problem, do you have children...After 1945, from the army he went into the police department. He has a higher position as an officer. Everybody wants to go where he was in this department, in the section of the city where he was, under him...

VALERIE Can you tell us now about the experience you had as a rescuer?

Mrs Kiss When the Hungarian take over this part of Czechoslovakia, he was also in the Army and he went to take over the town, they started the same thing as they do in other cities and towns like ours; hate the Jewish, break the windows... When he heard, the first thing he stopped them and take care of them. So nobody get hurt in this town where he goes and no Jewish were hit or in trouble. He stoppd them immediately when he heard that something was going on...I want to believe him when he told me that. Then later here I find a friend who was in this town where he went. I ask her, does anything happen with the Jewish in your town when the Hungarian army come in...

VALERIE How did you stop them?

BARNA KISS I was the commander...

MRS KISS The soldiers catch the people who make the trouble and take them-- not to the prison...

EVA When you were making the decision to tell the other soldiers to come with you...

BARNA KISS I tell the soldier, take back these...

EVA Did you think a lot about it...

MRS KISS Immediately he...

BARNA KISS When I wait, is too late...

MRS KISS Catch the troublemakers and bring them in.

EVA Did you go with them too?

MRS KISS No, he don't have to...he just give the orders.

VALERIE This was in 1938...

EVA What town was this in?

MRS KISS L E V A.

EVA This was a Czechslovakian town that was occupied by Hungary?

MRS KISS Right--now it is called L E V E.

EVA Today it's Czechslovakia?

BARNA KISS Yes. Now it is Slovakia.

VALERIE When was the next time you saved people?

MRS KISS In 1939 there was coming from Poland Jewish and other people running away to Hungary. They was in the town Nove Zamky and he was helping to give them papers. The Polish officers when they get the papers, they find a way to go to England.

VALERIE How many people did you get papers for?

MRS KISS He never count.

VALERIE Did you think you were doing something dangerous?

MRS KISS Yes it was dangerous.

VALERIE Why did you do it?

BARNA KISS I want help...

MRS KISS When somebody is in trouble, he want help.

VALERIE Were you always that way?

BARNA KISS Yes:

VALERIE Was your mother and father that way?

MRS KISS They didn't have a chance. They wasn't in a situation like that.

VALERIE What would have happened to you if you had gotten caught?

MRS KISS He say it depends what kind of judge you got--just like here...

Let me tell you another story that just came to my mind. That was in 1940. My mother had a friend in Czechoslovakia...already the Jewish was in trouble ...asked Barna to take his mother to Budapest...he couldn't make it this time, but somebody else, unknown, he never find out who it was, ask him...take two children Jewish...to the Hungarian side. Without asking who it is--he don't even know the names of the children--he said, of course...brought them to the Jewish organization who take care of the Jewish children who was escape from

other countries. And later he make another trip to save this mother from our friend...

VALERIE So some of the friends you knew but others were strangers?

MRS KISS He don't care about it...it doesn't matter.

VALERIE Did anyone know that you were doing this?

MRS KISS It wasn't a thing what you talk about it.

EVA Did your family know that you were helping? Your sister, brother?

MRS KISS He say No...He do it when it was necessary to help people...

VALERIE Would there be anyone you wouldn't like to help?

MRS KISS He say If somebody was in trouble, he would help.

EVA Were there some people who asked you to help, but for some reason you couldn't help?

MRS KISS ...That happened in 1942 when he get this Jewish labor battalion. They have to walk 2000 miles. If somebody couldn't walk and stopped somewhere, they shoot them...One of the men in his battalion had a bad leg...He stop and say I can't walk. Barna couldn't help him so he left him there. It wasn't allowed to put in a carriage or a car...Three weeks later, he is still alive and he is not mad of him because of that. He wrote a book in Budapest. He sent him the book and dedicated to him...He was in danger but he made it...There were two other Jewish labor battalions, what means 428 people killed...maybe 10 people escape to Russia or get sick in the hospital... Other in the battalions, everybody was killed... Instead of going to the front...put down on the front , somebody is touching there, they blow up. That was the job what these Jewish should do--the labor battalions put them down or take them out. Of course, many of them get killed. Barna managed that his battalion don't have to go to do this work. Instead, he find in a forest they was working with the wood to make out skis, telephone poles...

EVA What did you do with the prisoners of war?

BARNA KISS They was working.

EVA What year was that?

BARNA KISS 1942.

VALERIE How did you work it out so that you could do this?

MRS KISS He know somebody who was ahead of him. He ask him, please send me and my people to this place.

BARNA KISS Did you think you would be able to save them this way?

MRS KISS Yes. First of all, when you have wood you are not suffer from cold. You have a warm place. You have warm water and you can wash yourself. Then he take care of it that everybody get food what was very important because the others didn't give out food to the Jewish. They was starving. And in his battalion...(reads Dedication)...

EVA Was there anything that Mr. Kiss did to help you during the war? Maybe you can tell us where you met?

MRS KISS Barna was sent from the Ministerium chemical department and I was living there in 1939 with my parents...we had an open house and everybody was welcome who came. I have an older sister. Many people was in our house. Always big company. And his boss was coming also to our house. That's how we met each other.

VALERIE How old were you when you met?

MRS KISS Fourteen.

VALERIE When did you get married.

MRS KISS In '45. After the war.

VALERIE So you knew each other all through the war. You fell in love right away?

MRS KISS Not me, he...I don't know right away. I wasn't even thinking about it. He was a grown up man about 27. I was thinking he was coming to the house because of my sister. She was a beauty and 5 years older, and everybody was in love with her...When he first kissed me, then I was thinking about it...

EVA What was your connection throughout the war, after '39?

MRS KISS Both of us went to Budapest to the main city in 1940...Before my family came, I was already in Budapest. They send me to a ballet school to learn ballet and acrobatic and singing. My mother's idea was that I was very talented and I will be somebody sometime. Well, it doesn't turn out that way. Never mind... Then my family came in 1940 and take an apartment in Budapest. Barna was already living there.

VALERIE You would come to visit the family?

BARNA KISS Every day. Sometimes her mother and I fighting.

VALERIE Was it dangerous for you to visit a Jewish family?

MRS KISS Not in '40, but in '42 it was already dangerous because he gets remarks from the people who was living in the same house where we do and was

*MARRIED
after war
with girl*
*Relationship
with
partner*

Mrs. Kiss (cont)

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negotia

Christian...For example was a young girl who makes remarks--aren't you ashamed to visit a Jewish girl--to bring flowers to a Jewish girl...That was already inconvenient. So from this time he was hiding the flowers so she couldn't see.

EVA Were you taken to a camp or were you hidden?

MRS KISS When the Germans came in October 1944--I'm talking about occupied Hungary--the worst part in Budapest. At this time they took the Jewish out of Budapest--all the cities, all the towns, all the places where Jewish was deported already. But in Budapest we still was alive. We have to wear the Jewish star...

VALERIE What did you think about that she had to wear a star?

MRS KISS His opinion that he wouldn't put on the Jewish star...Nobody... In Denmark the King put on the Jewish star too, and that was the end of it. His opinion is that the Hungarian too...As I told you from the beginning, the Hungarian was anti-Semite all the time.

EVA When was the first time you remember seeing somebody with a Star?

MRS KISS When he went to the Russian Front in 1942 to Poland.

EVA Do you remember the first person you saw with it?

MRS KISS He say, it is a very bad memory with the train to the Front...

the Jewish were begging for a piece of bread. They was hungry and in the front they have to wear a big Jewish Star. He say, they throw food out of the window to the Jewish. That was the first time he saw it in 1942...

*Just
didn't
believe*

When he came back to Budapest nobody believed it. He told my father. That was in '44. Once my mother came home from shopping and she was laughing and laughing. ...Guess what I heard--they will make from us soap. She was laughing--I will not be a regular soap, I will be a fancy soap. And that wasn't a joke-- it was true...Nobody believed. He know because he see already...Babi Yar--

he see this, he tell this...He didn't see the action...Compare to the other Jewish,

*Belonged
with
Rovand
Disbelief*

we have a good life still because we went to theatre, to movies, companies, & luncheon and dinner and parties--so we had a good life still.

VALERIE What couldn't you do?

MRS KISS At this time we still have our radio. We don't have a car...

As far as I remember we always have a car...Working conditions were different.

They couldn't hire a Jewish as a boss or a higher position as a supervisor.

There wasn't any officer who was Jewish...they take away in '42 the rank from

my father and give him a book with a big J (JEWISH)--you never see such a book.

You don't have to show it. It doesn't matter...My father was in Menchausen ? .

BARNA KISS He was very good friend.

VALERIE He got out?

MRS KISS Yah.

EVA What happened in '44--were you taken to any of the camps or hidden?

MRS KISS When Hungary was take over, came Salershee ? who was worse than the Germans with the Jewish--when he take over as commandant in Hungary & Budapest (the other was no Jewish, only in Budapest was Jewish)--that was the last time I saw my father, October 20, 1944...It was a big shock for me because I was very attached to my father and I loved him...On October 23rd came the law that the Jewish woman has to go too. That was on Monday. On Sunday evening, they came to the house...He called up that he is waiting for me downstairs and he told me that tomorrow you have to go, and he said you are not going...He said, six o'clock in the morning I am waiting for you in this corner. You come out with a coat... take everything double what you can. He give me before Christian papers to hide with it. Next morning instead of going to a Concentration Camp, I am going with him. He has to go to the Front again. I was scared to death to be alone without him so I said I am going with you wherever you go... It was unforgettable because in this train was high officers and the whole time they was saying-

It's about time they take the rotten Jewish and they kill them. And I was just sitting and listening and very quiet...We arrived at the place without food... After 3 days they were on the Front already--they don't have any food, and what they have they wouldn't sell even for money...He find for me a place near to Budapest--some cousin of his nanny. She had a cigar store--she know or she didn't know if I'm Jewish or not, I never find out. She never ask me. She gave me place in her room, and that's why... He prepared already before that I would go there.

EVA How did you know that she would take somebody in?

MRS KISS He say, because of nanny. That was a nice family so he trust her. He didn't said it's a Jewish girl. He said just I bring somebody here.

EVA What do you think would have happened if you told her it's a Jewish girl?

MRS KISS He say, nothing. I am almost positive that she know I was Jewish, but we never talked about it.

VALERIE How long did you stay there?

MRS KISS Until Christmas. Before Christmas happened a big ?

EVA Demonstration? Commotion? Raid?

MRS KISS Right. A police raid. They came to the cigar store. They came from house to house, room to room, cellar to cellar to look for hiding people. There was a curtain and I was sitting in the room. I forget everything my hiding told me and I was prepared and dressed to go with them. They came into the cigar store and asked, do you have any cigarettes. No, I said, we don't have any. We will look for it. I say, go ahead look for it. If you find it, it's yours. They say, OK goodbye, and went out. I said, that's it, I can't take anymore. When he came visiting next time, I say to him I go with you again. That was on Christmas...that was the time when he should go to Austria--he didn't follow

the orders, and he escape from the Army. He belonged almost as the same category as a hidden Jewish because he was hiding a deserter. That was the last chance. We were on the train to go to Austria with the other officers together... He said, wait I have a phone call to make, and the train pulled out. That was the last train because this was the time at Christmas when the Russians made a circle around Budapest and it wasn't anymore a way to go out...We were stuck--what to do, no place to sleep, no hotels or anything like that...We tried and a woman said for one night you can stay here...come in and go out nobody should see you... I stay and never come out... One side the bomb take away; I was on the other side. When the bomb was coming everybody went down to the basement except me...nobody knows that I am in the house...He was not with me. He was every night in different places. They was looking for him, and when they catch him they would kill him... In 1944 at this time, he has 4 apartments under his name in Budapest. In all 4 apartments was Jewish hiding--20, 25, 30.

VALERIE You rented the apartments?

BARNA KISS Yes.

MRS KISS This was in '44 when the Germans came in.

EVA You found the apartments and rented them?

BARNA KISS (Explains in Hungarian)

MRS KISS Someone will have to translate it is too complicated. He had a friend who had the power to give out apartments--the Commandant's helper--that was an old friend. He give him help when he say I want one more apartment and another apartment...

EVA Did you know the people who came to stay in the apartment? Or did one person bring another person?

MRS KISS He say mixed...sometimes my friend is coming tonight to stay here.

VALERIE Did they ever give you anything in return?

MRS KISS No. Never. He didn't do it for that. He never get anything. Once he get an offer from a Jewish millionaire. He ask Barna to be his bodyguard and give him a fortune for that. And he said, I don't have time... You are not the only one. For money he wouldn't be a bodyguard...You can't impress him with money. He is not interested at all in money.

EVA Where were his parents during this time?

MRS KISS His mother was in the same cigar store. They came up from Dembresen because there was a big, big fight in this town...As I told you, his father was scared of the bombing so they just left and come to Budapest. His mother stay where I was hiding and his father with a sister and brother in-law went to Austria...and in '45 they come back.

VALERIE What about your mother and sister?

MRS KISS My mother stay in this house where I left and this house became a Jewish house. So everybody move in from other houses wasn't Jewish. In this apartment maybe 40-50 people. Then they say no more Jewish houses. You have to leave in 24 hours. My mother go to another Jewish house and in January 1st, not even the German, the Hungarian took 600 person from this house and shot to the river including my mother. I don't know about it. Only later when I heard it. I don't have any connection at all...My sister get married in 1914...this time it wasn't Israel, it was Palestine...But before she went to Tel Aviv, she called my father and she said, send all the papers--passports, visas, everything--come with the family. So my mother, my father and me...my father don't want to hear about it... Like a hymn in Hungary--you have to live and die here... Barna bring Christian papers for my father and mother to hide--here is the apartment, here is the key, whenever you have

to , but once a week show up in the house so they know you live here...
And my father throw him out--Never, ever mention that because you not my
friend anymore. Barna say, that's not the law...but my father was a straight
man--what they said must be done...

EVA When did Barna's father leave the army?

MRS KISS He was only a few months in the army until they took away
the book, like I say.

EVA What did he do during that time?

MRS KISS Originally he was an engineer--agriculture. He had 3 diplomas
in 2 different countries. First he made in Budapest, then when he went to
Czechoslovakia he make it all over...He was very rich...Later, when the
Hungarian came in, he couldn't work and he could not have any more employees.
When we went to Budapest, it was a Swiss company where he was like a vice-
president...But I still don't know how, before the German came in, he get a
invitation from the Ministerium to come in for work. He went in and said,
gentlemen there must be a mistake because I am Jewish. They said, we know
that. They say, we need your work and we need you. And they give a job
for him to do. When the German was coming in, he was working for the Minis-
terium. Then when they came in, it was over.

EVA Did your mother work at all?

MRS KISS She didn't work. Do you know how many servants we had in our
house? Five.

EVA What was the Jewish background in your family like?

MRS KISS We wasn't religious.

VALERIE Did you go to synagogue?

MRS KISS In the big holidays...Not kosher...But on Friday my mother light
the candles. Or when it was a yahrzeit, and I'm doing too--still. Do you

know who is the biggest Jewish in the family? He. He is the one who wants to celebrate every Jewish holiday...Celebrate Hanucah and a Christmas tree beside it. They are very good friends. They don't fight with each other.

EVA How did your sister become a Zionist?

MRS KISS I don't think she was a Zionist. She just married a Spanish Jewish. A very rich man and they go to Israel and settle down there.

VALERIE Is she still there?

MRS KISS She died.

VALERIE How long ago?

MRS KISS In '67...Barna had a brain operation in '64 on Christmas night ...He had a cyst on the brain from where it comes nobody knows...He is legally blind because the cyst damaged the eye nerves. Thank God, he is alive... After the operation, he get epileptic fit...It is under control.

VALERIE Just to go back a little...we left you in 1944 living in the house in Budapest, then what happened? How did the two of you get out of the country?

MRS KISS We get married in '45...He don't want to enjoy the Communist Party either...He don't like the terrorism. He don't want to go to the Communist Party so they put him in the jail for six months...He go to his friends to give him a Passport...Ticket was prepared to come out. He made a mistake when he told me when we go out together, I have to work. I said I am not crazy to go out. Why should I work--here I am not working. I still have a maid here who is doing the housework...After '48 they pushed him to the Communist Party...He looked for the hardest work you can imagine...carrying coal on his back to the apartments--200 lbs on his back...

EVA So you were separated a lot?

MRS KISS You can say that again. And almost 5 years in Israel when he was on the ship. I was alone with the children.

VALERIE How many children?

MRS KISS Two -- one in Maryland and my daughter is in Florida...

EVA I'm going to take you back to the prison...

MRS KISS Don't take him back to prison. That was enough for me.

Besides he was 10 times in the hospital since we are here in this country besides the brain operation...O.K. back to prison. After '48 we want to leave the country legal...He get 6 months...When he came out from the prison ...In 1950 is my son born. My daughter in '54.

EVA You went to Israel?

MRS KISS In 1957...In 1956 on this night, 3000 people go to the border. Five of them was caught. We was included (laughter). Out of 3000 spies, we was caught.

VALERIE With all the people you saved, you couldn't save yourself.

MRS KISS They took us back to Budapest, and he said, don't back out--tomorrow we try again. I said, you can try, not me... It was September and it was cold. I heard stories how they went through the river with the children on the back--frozen to death...He said, I will go and I am taking the children. No, I said the children stay with me...He ask me, would you come with passport. Of course, I would. So when the passport office opened--at 5'oclock in the morning he was already staying there (laughter)...In another month when we went out of the country, she was still full with spots but she was over the pox.

VALERIE So you went to Israel?

MRS KISS Yes. And spent 2 beautiful weeks in Italy. That was our honeymoon...We was in Genoa on the Italian Riviera in a small hotel what was all

marble...Then we go to Israel with the ship...He work with the same captain on the ship in 1932-33. He invited us for tea in his cabin...He asked what we want to do, where he want to go as a sailor, so he give advice...He said you go to the port and you -find many friends with whom you was working together...In a very very short time, he was already on a ship (laughter). You know how is in Israel, they don't care if he not Jewish...(Only thing he can't be a citizen...

EVA A Jew is a citizen automatically; a non-Jew becomes a citizen after 5 years.

MRS KISS He get a passport.

EVA So you are a citizen.

MRS KISS For the first year he was working with the Hungarian book on the ship... (laughter)....

EVA What made you decide to come to New York?

MRS KISS ...I said to my husband that to be a sailor is not for a man who has family. The children growing up don't have any father...He was away in Africa for 7 months, he came back...the 3-year old daughter didn't recognize him (laughter)...and without language what can you do in Israel. He was already 50-years old. He tried digging...When he was coming back & forth between New York & Haifa, he had a connection with friends who asked why are you suffering in Israel. Come to the United States. It's much easier. More chance. Better-paid work. We help you with affidavit... We came on the Czechoslovakia quota what was open. The Hungarian quota was a long waiting list...

EVA Did you share with your children about your experiences during the war?

MRS KISS Yes. And my children are very interested in it--not as I heard from other Hungarian parents who survived and lived through all those bitter things; other children don't want to hear about it...My son used to say, Daddy I listen to you 30 years, you have always something new to tell me. I know already all your stories and you always have something new to tell me. They are very proud of their father, and their mother too.

EVA Is there one particular thing you have tried to teach them as a result of your experiences?

MRS KISS Just to be a person--straight--open with feelings.

EVA And Mr. Kiss?

MRS KISS He tell him what he did.

VALERIE What kind of work does your son do?

MRS KISS He is a mathematician; working for General Electric Company as computer analyst... He is interested in everything. He is in judo, horseback riding, skiing. In his house, he is repairing electric, plumbing, everything. He can cook...

VALERIE Your daughter?

MRS KISS She is married. She has children. Her husband is in Air Force (laughter)....

EVA One thing I left out--were you involved in any political party in Hungary before the war?

MRS KISS Not before the war; after the war. He was before the war-- something like agriculture. After the war that was the biggest party and the winner party in Hungary; not the Communist party, they come later.

EVA Today are you involved politically?

MRS KISS When he come here, he was with the Democratic Party. But when the Democrat Party do this with Nixon, he quit.

EVA You used to go to Democratic meetings in the neighborhood?

MRS KISS Meetings? No. Sometimes before, he go.

EVA Do you belong to any church here?

MRS KISS The last time was in '47, and that was unusual. He go only once because his uncle made something...He was a bishop & visiting in U.S.

EVA Do you belong to the Hungarian association of survivors?

MRS KISS No. And I don't go to temple either since my parents was killed. It doesn't mean that I'm not praying or I don't believe in God...all the religions are a business. And especially here.

EVA One other thing, do you ever discuss with each other whether you trust people a lot or are you cautious about people?

MRS KISS He don't trust people. He don't like people. He like dogs, squirrels, flowers; not people. That's a big difference between us. When he trusts somebody, this person has to deserve it... I like people. I trust people. That's why he doesn't have friends. And as I told you, in all his life maybe he have 5 friends--but they was good friends...In this book, THE POLITICS OF GENOCIDE: THE HOLOCAUST IN HUNGARY, his name is in it.

EVA Yes. He is at the Graduate Center at our University. Did the author interview you?

MRS KISS No. We want know how to get this book...It cost a lot of money.

EVA ...We'll find out.

MRS KISS He is a Hungarian but he doesn't speak it anymore.

EVA Were your parents involved politically at all?

MRS KISS (translation) no response

EVA How is it to depend on your wife particularly the times that you were ill--can you accept help from somebody else?

MRS KISS It takes him a long time to get used to it. Months and months

he was very nervous, not relaxed at all. When he get nervous, he went to the fresh air for an hour for a walk in Flushing in a forest. He go for a walk and when he came back he was relaxed. Then he get used to it, that's how life is and he has to take it how it is. He feed the birds, he feed the fish, the dogs.

EVA We talked about your stressful experiences. Which would you say is the most stressful experience in your life...

MRS KISS In 1942 when he was on the Front. That was the most difficult time he can remember. He was on the Russian Front with the Jewish labor battalion...Everyday the Commandant kill the Jews...He had many many difficult times in his life, but that was the most...In '44 was also very difficult. He left the Army, he was wearing the uniform, but he was escaped from the Army. How you call it--a deserter. That was very hard.... When he saw on the highway walking--children, old & young going to the concentration camp. He saw it. It was unforgettable...If somebody couldn't walk, they killed him.

EVA Thank you very much for talking with us. We are going to transcribe the interview. We'll show it to you. If there is something you want to add to it or we would like to ask.

MRS KISS He ask for what you need this?

EVA We hope eventually to write it up--hopefully it will be a book. Certainly before that happens, we will let you know. We'll let you know beforehand if we plan to use your name.

VALERIE We're going to be interviewing other people who rescued Jews during the war...We are interested in having the names of other survivors you helped.

MRS KISS He want to know, how many people you interview so far?

EVA Very few. Not too many. We're going to Germany this summer to interview some people over there. I have somebody whose family came from Hungary; maybe she will go to Hungary and interview a few people there. In every place there is only a few. That's why we have to travel so far to find somebody.

MRS KISS You are running out of time because the people are dying... Somebody just told me who didn't live through all these things--it's just a story, they don't believe it is really true that can happen in the 20th century...it's not true, it can't be. Especially the young generation.

VALERIE That's why we feel it's important.

MRS KISS Even in Israel, the Sabras told us--why do you let yourself I say, what can I do with my bare hands against their weapons....