

Hungary

Hungary with the capital Budapest is bordering on Slovenia, Croatia, Slovakia, Ukraine, Serbia and Austria.

The lifeline, river Danube, divides Hungary into the rolling eastern plains and the northern highlands.

Ten million Hungarians descended from Finno-Ugric and Turkish tribes who mingled with Avars and Slavs; in 9th century they established Hungarian Christian State in the Carpathian Basin.

Hungary is a tolerant society based on their patron St Steven who said: Make the strangers welcome in this land, let them keep their language and customs, for weak and fragile is the realm based on a single language and a single set of customs.

Hungary had a tragic history. Often it was Europe's religious, cultural and political frontier against Mongolian invasion, Islamic expansion and recently Russian invasion.

Transylvania, the cradle of Hungarian culture, was the only part of Hungary not conquered by other powers. Maria Teresa sent Germans to Transylvania to help in the fight against the invading Turks. Since then Hungary tried to free itself from Austrian yoke. In the middle of 19th century Hungary and Austria established a dual monarchy with Austrian Emperor acting as king of Hungary. Austria forced Hungary into the WWI, which they lost. In the Treaty of Versailles Hungary lost much of its land and resources. This was the reason for Hungary to join with Nazis in the WWII.

In 1956 thousands of Hungarians died in anti communist revolution. Hundreds of thousands fled as Russian tanks rolled in.

Lucy

I was born as an illegitimate child, Lucy Kobles, on 14.9.38.

My father was Robert Mihail Schwartz. He was an intelligent Jewish man who wanted to become a doctor. His father said that any idiot could be a doctor and that instead his son should become an engineer. Dad was 204 cm tall and had to bend his head to get through the door.

Dad applied many times for permission to marry mum but every time it was refused. People said to mum: Why would a nice Catholic girl want to marry an ugly Jew.

Finally my parents got the licence and they married on Friday the 13th. They called two strangers from the street as witnesses. They were in a hurry because they were afraid that officials would change their minds. Dad adopted me and I became Lucy Schwartz.

Mum's parents lived in Romania. My grandmother must have been good looking because she married a handsome army officer. She had a strict religious upbringing and believed that sex was only meant for procreation. As soon as she got pregnant, she told my grandfather: go away from me Satan. My grandfather went to Hungary. Mum blamed her mother. When mum was seventeen, she followed her father to Hungary. My grandfather was a publican. He was still legally married to my grandmother but he lived with three other women at the same time. The women knew about each other. He had three children with one and two by another.

Grandfather has never seen his daughter, my mum, as a child. When she arrived he saw a woman in her rather than a daughter. Mum soon moved in with her friend who had tuberculosis. Mum worked in a buffet and there she met my father. He realised that mum also caught tuberculosis. He knew that his father could help her.

My grandfather had a law degree and a doctorate but no money. He married my grandmother whose parents were rich farmers. With his knowledge and his wife's dowry my grandfather became established as a leading solicitor for the government railways. He had eighty solicitors working under him. During the communist revolution my grandfather's family lost most of their wealth. They were going to hang my grandfather but luckily the revolution got defeated. After escaping with his life my grandfather gave all his wealth to Jewish organisations. He built several hospitals. By the time his son met my mother he only had a Sanatorium for tuberculosis patients in Budapest. Dad persuaded my mother to go to the Sanatorium where she would be cured for free.

When mum was cured she had sex with my father out of gratitude. She became pregnant. My father was in love with her and wanted to marry her. She told him that she didn't love him. He told her that she would learn to love him later. Mum had no choice. Alone with a baby, without a job, she married him but she never learned to love him.

Mum was brought up to hate Jews. She taught us to hate Jews.

When Hitler came mum hated having a yellow star on our house. She had to fight to prove that we were not Jewish so Hungarian Nazis would not kill us. Later when we escaped to Austria I heard my 14 years old brother Rob talking to the neighbour's boy Lali. Nazis killed both their fathers because they were Jews. Rob made derogatory remarks about Jews and Lali got angry and said: How dare you dirty your father's memory like this. Whether you like it or not you are one of us. That made us think for the first time about being Jewish. Even my mother realised that she made a mistake in making us hate Jews. For the first time we became aware that we have Jewish blood in us.

I have vague memory of dad sitting near the window and speaking loudly. I do not know what he was saying but I remember that he had gold teeth at the back of his mouth.

I was too young to remember much about my father. Most of my memories come from my mother. She told me that dad had a huge appetite. When he was 13 years old Jews had their forty day fast. At the end of the fast his mother baked a goose for a feast. Dad secretly ate almost the whole goose. He became so sick that he could never eat meat again.

Soon after my brother was born in 1942 Germans took dad to a forced labour camp. They starved him so much that when they gave him a piece of pork speck he ate it despite his dislike of meat and despite his Jewish beliefs.

One-day dad came home from work to tell mum that they are taking him away. We had a boarder Bela Nagy at the time and dad asked him to look after us. Bela was a handsome man but I never liked him.

Dad never returned.

After the war a man told us what happened to dad. All the men marched for hours. Dad's varicose veins burst and began bleeding. At the railway station they told them that train would take the sick to the hospital so dad intended to go on the train. His friend was already on the train.

Someone told dad that people who go on a train would be killed. Dad went on the train to warn his friend but when they wanted to come down it was too late. The train closed and they were taken a few kilometres away where they had to dig their own graves before they were shot dead.

Our lodger, Bela, became my stepfather. He was a postal technician from an alcoholic dysfunctional family. I couldn't stand him. I think his whole family was a bit mad. He was an unhappy man who argued until he was blue in the face. Mum and Bela were fighting like cats and dogs all the time. Mostly they fought over us children. Bela used to say that he never saw worse children than we were.

Mum and Bela had another child, my stepbrother.

Once mum told Bela to leave us and he did. After six months mum heard that he was marrying a nineteen years old girl. Mum went to see him and eventually Bela returned home with her. He probably just tested mum because he wanted to come home. I suppose mum and Bela loved each other despite the arguments.

Mum worked at the restaurant late every night and Bela also worked. My dad's parents did not want me to live in that situation with no-one looking after me so they took me to their home.

I was upset because my brothers were allowed to stay with mum and I could not. I believed that mum and Bela did not like me. I got in trouble all the time. I ran away. My grandmother could not cope so they took me to a convent to be looked after by the nuns. My grandparents had to pay a lot for my keep.

Some of the nuns were really nice but I hated the priest. He turned forty and they made a big party for him. He told us that Virgin Mary appeared to him when he was nine and told him to become a priest.

Everybody thought that he was a saint but I didn't. There were about seven older orphaned girls in the convent. I saw this priest put his hand up girls' dresses and he stroked their bottoms. I don't know why but I felt that it was wrong. Maybe he didn't do anything else but I felt bad when he was around.

In the evening before my birthday we had beans for tea and I did not want to eat them. The nun said that I would have them for breakfast. At six in the morning on my birthday she pushed them into my mouth spoon after spoon with her hand scooping the beans.

We were starving after the war. Bela tried to swap some clothes for food with the farmers in the nearby villages. They caught him and threatened to send him to Siberia. The Russians wanted to get every available man to work in Siberia. Mum begged the officer to let him go. She was an attractive young woman and she played up to the officer until he let Bela go.

Mum decided to go herself to the rich farmers near the border to swap some things for food. She was heavily pregnant as she went to the railway station. The train was full of people. They did not dare go off the train for fear that someone would take their luggage or their spot. Nobody knew when the train would move. People held each other as they went to the toilet on the side of the train. When the train moved, it was supposed to stop before the border but it just slowed down a little and everybody jumped from the train. Mum was afraid that she would lose the baby but she didn't. She was away for weeks. She swapped things for potatoes and flour and butter and she dragged all that home.

In the meantime at home Bela cooked beans. We had nothing else. While he had some fat we did not mind beans but in the end it was just beans and I got sick of them.

Before I turned thirteen communists closed the convent so I had to go home.

I started fighting with Bela again so they sent me to a boarding school.

As a teenager I began to write a diary. I wrote about boys. The headmistress found my diary and sent me home. I told her that I did not do anything wrong and that it was all just a fantasy.

I told my story to the newspaper reporter and they published it.

They sent me to another boarding school. For an unexplained reason the head mistress did not like me. I was always in trouble.

A few months after I went home, the headmistress rang my mother to ask her if I could recite a poem for a show. I was very good at reciting poetry.

Mum was upset with the headmistress and asked: Why do you want Lucy now? She was never good enough for you when she was there. You never liked her.

The headmistress explained that my best friend told her lies about me and that I got into trouble because of that. Now she found out that it was all a lie so she wanted to apologise.

My friend was a village girl we took in to have a holiday with us in Budapest. I really liked her and never thought that she would do me any harm.

When I was in high school Stalin was God. Whenever his name was mentioned we had to clap and his name was mentioned over and over many times every day.

I was fifteen and in a boarding school when Stalin died in 1953.

Everything changed.

I heard an 18 years old boy, Vili, say that it was about time Stalin died. His friend reported him to the authorities; they arrested him and bashed him. Vili later escaped and we met in Australia and he became my first husband.

The new official political line developed between 53 and 56. It began with people saying that Stalin was a murderer who killed Lenin and that he was a robber.

Our teachers were confused; nobody knew the correct, official policy.

I was eighteen in 1956. On my way from school I saw a placard on which university students demanded freedom of speech and press. They also wanted to get rid of Russian dominance.

The trams stopped running and there were lots of people walking. I joined the crowd and we walked to the national museum. On the platform was a man who asked us to go to the radio station and broadcast the students' demands. We moved towards the radio station and selected six students to go in. Thousands of us waited outside the Iron Gate for hours. We started calling for the students to come out. They did not come so the crowd rushed forward. Men broke the telephone pole and they began hitting the Iron Gate with it. The army came and dispersed us with tear gas. The police started shooting. A group of people went to the army barracks. The soldiers distributed guns and ammunition because they were also against the Soviet Union.

As I walked home I saw the cars burning and the trams overturned.

My neighbour was taken to the hospital. He was shot in front of the radio station. Two weeks later his girlfriend asked me to go with her to the hospital. We met a group of people who were collecting the injured from the streets. They also delivered parcels and messages from one revolutionary group to the other.

We joined the group. There was a curfew at the time but the leader of the revolutionary group later gave us a piece of paper that allowed us to travel anywhere anytime. Sometimes we transported ammunition.

After a few weeks the revolution was defeated.

When I came home I found out that mum and Bela were looking for me in the hospital. There were trucks loaded with people and soldiers were holding guns on them. Mum asked about me. A soldier said that my name was on the list and evidently I would be on the truck.

A secret police officer came looking for me. Mum told him that I wasn't home. She didn't know that he was my friend. He came to warn me to leave the country.

Two of the people from the neighbourhood escaped to Austria to see if it is easy to get through. They came back to pick up their families. When my mother heard about them she decided to join them with our family. She knew that I was going anyway and my brother also wanted to go.

Budapest used to be two cities, which are joined now. We lived in the outskirts of Pest. In the morning of 20.11.56 my brother and I got dressed in the several layers of clothes and started walking towards the railway station. My brother was fourteen and I was eighteen. Just before we reached the river that separates Buda from Pest, the curfew began. There was a two-story house where we used to take food for the children during the revolution. The caretaker took us in risking his life. It was still curfew in the morning when we decided to go across the bridge. We learned reasonable Russian at school and when the soldiers stopped us we told them we are going to work in Buda. At the railway station we bought tickets for the whole family. We sat on the train quietly, terrified of other passengers. Anyone could report us but as we got closer to the border it became apparent that everybody was going to escape.

That night twenty squadrons of Russian Mongolians came to Hungary. When we got closer to the border town's people who were waiting for the train told us not to go off the train because Russians are already there. When we got to one of the last stations they told us that Russians haven't arrived yet. Everybody got off the train. We walked about twenty kilometres to the border. We got there in the dark. People told us to go through the forest until we reached the bridge over the river. We couldn't find the bridge so we all waded

into the river. Bela, my brother and myself made many trips helping others get across. I became so exhausted that I went under. I had a sheepskin jacket and Bela grabbed for it and pulled me out.

The river was shallow but freezing cold. I got soaked and we walked in wet clothes. We had no idea if we were in Austria or in Hungary as we came to a lake. There was an abandoned boat and we rowed it over to the other side. Border patrol was shooting at us but we came to the other side safely. We walked for a long time. My grandmother couldn't walk so we were pulling her. The trucks came towards us; we had no way of knowing if they were Hungarian or Austrian but we didn't care we just wanted a ride. These Austrian farmers told us that we would all die of pneumonia. They lit the haystack and we sat around to dry ourselves. They gave us some schnapps to drink. The younger ones went to report to the police. The trucks came and took us into the village. Different farmer's families took us in and we stayed there for a few days. I had to wash all our clothes. They gave us beds with thick eiderdowns and food. We gave them gifts that we brought with us. We decided to go to Vienna Rothschild spital, a hospital converted to a refugee centre, where they organised the distribution of refugees.

Twenty of us went to one room because we wanted to be together. Some of the people were given money from different organisations. Bela got 500 shillings from Austrian PMG because he was working for PMG in Hungary. We were fed but the food was terrible. We supplemented the rations with the money Bela got.

Bela's sister lived in Australia so Bela talked my mother into going to Australia. I didn't want to go with them because I hated Bela. In Hungary we lived in our house but in Australia we would have to live with his sister. Mum talked me into going with them. We made the application, went through interviews and medical checkups and finally got the papers. They told us that we would go to Australia with the first ship.

Every day for weeks we were going to the office to look for the tickets but they did not arrive. The ship left a day before our tickets finally arrived. There were about ten of us with the tickets for Aurelia ship that got the tickets too late. We were upset so we decided to go to Salzburg where the refugee headquarters were. We came to Salzburg just before Christmas 1956.

They told us that Catholics could go to Australia as a Christmas gift by Qantas. The plane was scheduled to stop at Abidjan in Arabia. At the time Arabs and Israelis were fighting and the Arabs said that if there was anyone Jewish on that plane they would kill everyone. Mum assured the authorities that we were all Catholics. Everybody was saying how come we were Catholics with a Jewish name Schwartz.

We arrived to Australia on 27.12.1956. Catholic and Jewish representatives waited to help us. The Jews asked us if we were Jewish because of our name but my mother insisted that we are not. The Catholic priest then came to us and said that if anyone is in any way related to Jews to go with them because they could help more than Catholics can. We still didn't go with the rabbi but half of the passengers from the plane did. Most of them were Jews.

We were taken to a refuge outside Sydney and stayed there until Bela's sister Agnes sent us money to travel to Adelaide where she lived.

We were the first refugee family from Hungarian revolution that came to Adelaide. The newspaper reporters came to the railway and our story was published so everybody knew about us. People offered to help us but Agnes and her husband said that they would look after us.

Agnes rented us an apartment in her huge house. After a few days Bela got a job as a telephone technician and paid rent to his sister. The apartment was furnished with bits and pieces picked from the rubbish tip.

Soon we went to buy our own second hand furniture. We found a nice leather lounge and they wanted seven pounds for it. We told them that we were refugees and they said that they would give it to us for five. We said we would go home to get the money. We went back in the afternoon but the lounge was sold. Agnes bought it and hid it in the shed.

Everybody in Bela's family was a bit funny like that.

Agnes had a huge yard with 180 fruit trees but we were not allowed in the orchard. I think that Agnes was afraid that we would pick the fruit or do some damage. When they were in a charitable mood they gave us fruit but we were never allowed to pick it ourselves.

Agnes also locked the pantry where she stored her preserves. She accused us of stealing jam.

Sometimes they would be very generous and at other times they would be unreasonably tight. Agnes was very generous to us years later. She bought us a car and an air-conditioner.

Agnes had no children and she was scared of what children would do. My two brothers were lively 14 and 11 years old boys. They kicked the ball on the bitumen road one-day and Agnes complained that they lifted too much dust and made the roof dirty.

The incident developed into a nasty row, which was the last straw after all other accusations. The whole family was arguing and in the end we packed up and walked out. We walked outside all night.

The next day we looked for our own place. We had no car and knew very little English. We weren't very smart at all. We rented a house from an agent for seven pounds a week. The house was supposed to be furnished but it had no beds or wardrobes. We bought everything on hire purchase and we could not make repayments. Bela earned fifteen pounds. He needed money for travelling to work and for his smokes. It practically left us nothing to live on. Mum took in five lodgers to help with money. I was 18 and too old for the junior wage so it took me over a month to get a job in Alaska ice-cream factory. After six weeks ice-cream season was over and they told me to come back in four months.

Agnes found me a job in the Catholic presbytery. One older priest was teaching me all sorts of things and one day he started touching me. I pushed him away and ran home. He wrote me a letter saying that priests are only humans. He gave me an English Hungarian dictionary as a parting gift but I never went back.

An older Hungarian man's wife worked at Phillip's. She told me how to get a job there. I learned quickly and worked hard but the management continuously increased the norm. I pushed myself to the limit because I didn't want to lose my job. I could not speak English so I could not complain. I skipped lunch and tea; I did not even go to the toilet so I could do the norm. One day four men in white coats came and watched me work. I was afraid that I would be sacked if I don't do enough so I persevered. At the end of half an hour I made more than a norm. After the men left the co-workers attacked me physically and verbally but I could not understand what it was all about. They got a Hungarian interpreter from a different section and she explained to me. The workers complained to the bosses that it was impossible to do the norm but I just proved it to them that it can be done.

My legs were swollen from pushing the welding pedal in the factory so I asked for a day off to see the doctor. I heard that they were looking for nursing aides in the hospital so I asked for a job. My co-workers at Phillip's realised that I did not understand what was happening so they apologised for attacking me. They gave me many presents when I left.

In the hospital it was awful because every time a patient got sick I got sick. I took everything too much to heart and became emotional about their suffering. I thought that the nurses were cold hearted but they were just being professional. I stayed for about a year.

There was a Standard English test at the university which everybody from non English background had to do to enter university in Australia. From five hundred entrants seven of us passed the test. They were amazed that after two years I learned so much English. The university dean asked me about my college studies in Hungary. I told him that I studied geology at the technical

college and he gave me a certificate equivalent to Australian high school plus geology component.

I got a job in the research laboratory of the Mines department. I worked on the spectrograph. They crush stones to determine the mineral content of the material. I learned quickly and enjoyed my work. The engineers were teaching me all the time patiently and I was very grateful. I had to get naturalised to keep the job.

I enrolled at university. I got time off work for study. I was getting full wages but I only worked seventeen hours a week. My future looked very bright and promising. It was the best time of my life.

The only problem was my fiancé Vili and my family.

I lived at home at the time and we were arguing constantly. I hated it but it was my duty to help support the family.

On the first day there was a reception and a ball at uni. I told Vili that I would come out after the dean finished his speech. That was ten in the evening. I was the only girl enrolled in geology. Vili got jealous because the boys wanted me to stay and dance with them.

I came home late one day from Villi's place and mum called me a whore. We had a horrible argument and I left with Vili.

Vili was a semitrailer driver and he wanted me to go with him trucking. We argued about it all the time. He made it impossible for me to continue with the studies.

I had to give up my job. I repaid the money the mines department invested into my study and I dropped out of university to go with Vili on the semitrailer.

I was pregnant and I did not want Vili to say that he had to marry me. I decided to have an abortion. Villi's cousin took me to a Hungarian dentist who was doing abortions. He gave me an iodine injection and told me that I will be in pain. As I took the taxi home I screamed and the driver had to stop because I was vomiting. Luckily he thought that I was drunk. Abortions were illegal and I was terrified that someone would report me to the police. A few days later the dentist gave me another injection. I had no money for a taxi so I went home by train. From the railway station I crawled home in agony. I believed that I was going to die. I was almost unconscious as I crawled into bed. I was haemorrhaging heavily and I noticed a lump of flesh that was a baby.

Two weeks later Vili and I got married in the presence of two witnesses in the Catholic Church. I expected some kind of celebration but when we got home Vili changed into his overalls and went to work. I hoped that my wedding day would be somehow special. Vili came home late from work. I suppose he was tired because he just turned over in bed and went to sleep.

Later Vili and I wanted to have a baby. I became pregnant but lost the baby every time during the early pregnancy. We went back to that dentist to ask

why I couldn't have a baby. He said that there was something wrong and I would have lost the first baby anyway. Apparently I am lacking the hormones that make the placenta and the baby grow.

Since then I had infections of my uterus, tubes cleaning and complete removal of left tube and ovary before I finally had a hysterectomy at the age of 41.

I was married for fifteen years. There were times when Vili and I were happy and I enjoyed travelling with him. I helped with loading and driving the truck. We hardly ever slept because we were always on the road. Other truck drivers told us about tablets that would keep us awake. Some were slimming tablets and we took them by the hand-fuls. We bought them from the chemist. At first we didn't need a script but later we did and then we bought them on the black-market. We were young and healthy and we never thought of the consequences. I could hardly wait to stop taking them. While on these tablets I suffered a nervous breakdown and was hospitalised for two weeks. I came out and was back on the truck and back on the pills.

We lived in Adelaide with my parents in law and later we bought a house next to them. I idolised my mother in law at first. She was everything my mother wasn't. I hardly knew my mother. Later I discovered what a conniving woman my mother in law was. She was an extravagant woman and in total control of the whole family. If I wanted to buy something I had to beg her for money. She was squandering money and the three men could not supporter her lifestyle.

The service station contracted the transport jobs and the family subcontracted from them. Everything they bought went through the service station. My mother in law did not check the accounts or pay the bills. We owed money and never saw any cash coming in.

I suggested to Vili that the two of us go through the TNT service. We worked for two years and paid our debts. The money came into my hands. The old service station then offered us loads for which they paid us cash. We paid cash for filling up.

I left Vili several times but he threatened to kill himself and begged me to stay. We decided to go to Andamooka to mine for opals. We asked Villi's father to look after our business.

I was mining for a year with Vili in Andamooka when we got a telegram to get home urgently. Vili and I worked all night to get out whatever opal we could. Vili went to fill up a generator and he told me to stay where I was but I was scared and I followed him. Next to the generator was a hole and when I stepped next to Vili I fell in about 2 to 3 metres. Vili pulled me out and we went back mining. Vili was rushing to finish the job. He accidentally hit his knee with a pick. I had to finish the job.

As we returned we discovered that Villi's family did not pay any of our bills. The business owed money. We had to sell the house to begin trucking again.

We owed money to my parents and Villi's parents. Villi's parents also lost the house and moved in with us in a rented house. I walked out after a huge argument.

I agreed to go with Vili to Coober Pedy. In Andamooka we had a bulldozer and an old bus converted into a caravan. It took Vili and his father months to fix the bulldozer before we could go to Coober Pedy. Vili suggested that his mother and sister come to Andamooka as well and I said that if they do I would go.

I had arguments with Vili.

I met Dodo years ago when Vili and I first went to Andamooka. I liked Dodo and wanted to go with him even then. I told Villi that I will leave him and go with Dodo. Vili pretended to have a heart attack down the mine and begged me not to leave him. I promised him never to see Dodo again.

We returned to Adelaide and I had not seen Dodo for years. When we returned to Andamooka to pick our bulldozer Dodo arrived. Wherever we went Dodo was always there. At a party Dodo had a few drinks and he asked me to dance. He kept saying that I should come with him. I told him to go out where we could talk privately. I left the door of the bathroom open so people would not think that something was going on. I begged him not to create a scene. He grabbed me and kissed me just when Villi walked in. I was upset and rushed out. I was going to go to Adelaide. Just as well I got bogged seven kilometres from home, because the petrol I had wouldn't last me to the next petrol station. I returned and found Villi and Dodo talking at the table. Vili said to Dodo that if he ever separated from me I should come back to him. I got angry with Vili because he was giving me away so easily. I had no real intention of going with Dodo because he was a known womaniser but I went and we had a good life together. Dodo is my second husband Erwin.

We found a big opal in Andamooka but by the time we sold it we had little profit. It was a 75 kilogram black matrix that had lots of opal going in and around it. We sold it in Western Australia for one hundred seventy five thousand dollars but the people who sold it for us only paid us one hundred thousand. We were sorry we sold it. We went to Europe for holidays and there we met a friend who was mining in Lightning Ridge. We decided to come and have a look. It was a lovely town. Other opal fields looked like moon craters. Ridge black Opal was also the most beautiful. We lived in a tent and later in a caravan until we bought a block of land and built a house. I am half Jewish by birth but I was brought up in the Catholic religion. I believe that Jews are God's chosen people but they disobeyed Jehovah and were therefore put at the mercy of other nations. If they kept the covenant with Jehovah all would be well with them.

I always wanted to become a Missionary because I loved the idea of teaching about God and helping the poor.

After the war communists told us that there is no God. I was angry with God because he allowed the oppression and suffering but when I was in trouble I

still prayed. The mysticism of the church ritual still affected me strongly specially since the churchgoers were harassed and persecuted.

Mum's mother lived in Romania but she came to live with us a year before we all escaped from Hungary. She was brought up as a Protestant. Later she worked for the Catholic bishop whom she considered a saint. She was so taken with him that she became a Catholic. Since then priests could not do anything wrong in her eyes. In Australia she made us all go to church every Sunday. She criticised our behaviours all the time and we started hating going to church.

As a widow of a Jew killed by Nazis mum got some help for the children from the Jewish organisation in America. If we were Jews we would get more but they knew that we were brought up as Catholics. Mum stopped going to church when she decided to live with Bela. Bela hardly earned enough for us to live on.

My youngest brother was Bela's son but because mum did not remarry he was named Swartz and also received help.

Mum and Bela married as soon as we came to Australia.

The Jews I met are more religious than other people. I would be a Jew if I was brought up in a Jewish religion or if both my parents were Jews.

Jewishness and religion was a way of life for my father's parents. Every activity had religious rules and meaning. I.e. A saucepan used for meat could not be used for a milk product. The tea towels used to dry meat containers could not be used for other dishes.

Every week my grandmother would bake a platted white bread. After the sunset we sat down around the table. My grandfather lit the candles on the menorah and then he prayed in Hebrew.

Jewish women only go to church on special occasions. I only went once. The men put their caps on and wrapped themselves in some kind of cream coloured blanket before they read the scrolls. Everybody touched these scrolls wrapped in the burgundy colour velvet and then they kissed their own hands. This looked ridiculous to me and I laughed so they sent me out. My grandparents did not eat anything in my mother's house when they came together but if one of them came they would say don't tell the other that I took a piece of cake or something that was not kosher. Jews bought meat from the kosher butcher, which killed the animal and let the blood drain on the ground. Jews do not eat pork.

The Bible says that blood contains life and one must not consume it. Even now as a Jehovah witness I believe in this part of the Old Testament. Jehovah witnesses do not take blood transfusion. The law about not taking blood is repeated in the New Testament.

Circumcision was an essential part of Jewish law but Jesus came to fulfil and improve Jewish law. Apostle Paul sought a ruling on the circumcision. The authorities established that Jewish law of circumcision is not binding for Christians. Christians must not commit fornication, not eat anything sacrificed to idols or consume blood.

Bela's sister Agnes became a Jehovah's Witness during the seventies. Grace stayed in her caravan to instruct her. Grace travelled all over Australia to preach.

My family hated the Witnesses and considered Grace crazy. We thought that Grace converted Agnes to get her money.

Years later I met Grace in Andamooka. I called her in because I wanted to know what she said to convert Agnes. She began talking about the paradise on earth and I was laughing inside. I could not understand how anybody could believe in her fairy stories. Witnesses came to sell magazines and books. I bought them to get rid of them. I threw the books in the bin but the more I bought the more they came. I asked them not to come. Finally I had to slam

the door in their faces to get rid of them. We came to Lightning Ridge and I met Evelyn whom I also knew in Andamooka. I had no idea that Evelyn was a Jehovah witness. She was not witnessing in Andamooka. You can not be a Witness if you do not live your life according to the Jehovah principles. If you later change your life and want to come back they accept you. Evelyn was reinstated into Jehovah fellowship in Lightning Ridge. I invited her to my place and she brought me a Bible. I started to read the Genesis but it made no sense to me. I returned the Bible saying that reading it would make me lose the little bit of faith I still had. She told me to read the revelation. I couldn't understand the word of it. She began explaining and I learned. I told Evelyn that I am not interested in religion and if she weren't a friend I would have kicked her out long ago. She laughed and said: I know I am using our friendship.

I told Evelyn that Witnesses changed the Bible to suit their teaching. She brought other Bibles so I convinced myself that all the Bibles were saying the same things. At that point Evelyn asked me if I wanted to study the Bible. I told her that I would listen but would never convert. I had a very low opinion of people who changed their religion. She asked me if I would mind if she brought Grace with her. They began coming together. When Evelyn moved away Grace began teaching me. We argued over everything but I kept learning.

I learned that Catholic religion adopted many pagan celebrations and Greek philosophy. The doctrine of trinity and the celebration of Christmas came with Constantine in the fourth century.

The Bible says that at the beginning there was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. The word became flesh and it dwelt among us. Jesus was the word and the flesh, he was the only begotten Son of God.

Jews gave animal sacrifices for their sins but this ritual was to prepare them for Jesus who would give his lifeblood to vindicate Jehovah sovereignty. Until Jesus gave his lifeblood there was no resurrection. Jesus did what his father sent him to do. The Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles at Pentecost and filled them with the power to speak in the tongue everybody understood so they could preach to all people. Holy Spirit is God's active force. Speaking in tongues is no longer needed because now the Bible is available in all main languages.

At the time Dodo and I lived together for seventeen years without being married. I could not get baptised as Jehovah Witness without getting married so I asked Dodo to marry me. I could barely wait to be baptised so we went to Adelaide and married in a civil ceremony. My whole family and Dodo's family were against my new religion.

I was baptised on the 20.10. 90 at Sydney Jehovah's convention. I sat in the front row with other candidates. I panicked that I won't be able to do this. I wondered if I was hypnotised or I really believed.

A brother gave a talk before the baptism and when he spoke I felt a peace coming over me. I knew I was right.

All of the candidates stepped into the water. The two brothers on each side leaned us back into the water saying: we baptise you in the name of the father and son and the Holy Spirit.

The baptism was only the start of my religion. Grace never told me about the meetings I would have to attend after baptism and about witnessing. I was terrified of going to witness.

Jehovah Witnesses do not believe that we have a separate soul. When God blew into Adam's nostrils Adam became a living soul. God told the first two people if they ate of the forbidden fruit they would die. God clearly told Adam and Eve that they would return to the dust if they sinned. The person who sins dies. There is no hell, just death. The Bible says that there is no knowledge nor devising nor wisdom in the grave where you are going. The sacrifice of Jesus gives us a chance to be resurrected.

The serpent lied to Adam and Eve when he told them that they would not die. Satan lied when he said: only your body dies but your soul lives on.

Greek philosophers held a myth that there is a separate entity, the soul.

One hundred and forty four thousand Jehovah Witnesses will be resurrected to heaven to become rulers with Jesus. The rest of the resurrected mankind shall inherit the Earth and shall delight themselves in peace forever.

At first Dodo did not mind my association with witnesses because he believed that it was just a phase I was going through. When I asked him to marry me he was very happy. I told him that religion will take me away at times and I will have less time for him. He said that he did not care as long as I did not try to change him. When I went to be baptised he did not say goodbye to me. When I returned he refused to talk to me. Gradually he got sick of being angry and he saw that it did not change anything so we began talking again. He didn't like me going witnessing but he knew that I will do it because it was very important to me. He loved me enough to go along. Of course I tried to invite him into our religion but every time I try he closes down. He makes a joke of it saying: perhaps one day...

I lost my friends when I left Vili. They chose to stay friends with him. They only listened to me so they reported back to Vili. Everybody told me for years to leave Vili but when I did they did not Joed by me.

My friends and relatives refused to accept my religion. Although I never had any Jewish upbringing they believed that I betrayed Jewish religion. My mother said that nobody ever hurt her like I did. All her life she was terrified of cancer and when she got cancer I told her that we would be resurrected together and live together again. She said that she would rather go to hell than be with my cronies and me. Mum talked about it at every opportunity.

My brother taught that I was a bit stupid but gradually they all learned to ignore my religion.

Every witness has to do as much witnessing as possible. I was on my own in the Shipyard when I first offered people the Jehovah's magazines. Some people argued that we are wrong, they tried to convince me and I tried to convince them.

I dreaded witnessing. I was praying at the door that nobody would be home.

Going in pairs helped, you feel stronger. You get used to it.

Some people call us nasty names. A farmer once told us that he wanted nothing to do with trash. Normally people tell you if they are interested. Often people who are not interested end up talking for hours.

I have been witnessing now for eleven years.

The knowledge and the faith completely changed my life for the better. It answers all the questions I ever had. It is also a guide to my relationship with my husband and everybody else. I am still easily hurt. I used to have a quick temper and retaliated. Now I make an effort to see things from another person's point of view. I consider other people's upbringing and circumstances. They might be hurt themselves.

In the past I threatened to leave when Dodo and I had an argument. Now I don't say anything when he is upset and wait for an opportunity to talk. After the argument is forgotten I might tell him that I was hurt by a particular thing he said or did.

When I was six during the war the acting company was looking for child actors. There were over five hundred children auditioning for the place. They picked an English girl Coco and myself. Mum would have to take me to practice but the war was on and she did not want to risk me being killed.

In high school they were looking for singers for the Budapest choir. I did not even prepare a song but they took me on. The principal did not like me go to practice.

When in Australia there was a television talent quest called Stairways to the stars. I sang in Hungarian and got a huge ovation. They wanted me on the program but my mother in law said that she was not going to have a singer where in her family. So it came to nothing.

Ever since I remembered I wanted to be an actress. I had a good voice, I read poetry on stage, I had the talent but always something happened or somebody stepped in.

I won a writing contest and began writing romance stories but never finished any. I had an opportunity to go to acting school or singing school but my family stopped me. I enrolled in the university and my boyfriend stopped me. I opened a dress shop in Adelaide but did not do well.

For many years I was sorry that I came to Australia. In Hungary I would probably have gone to university and make something out of my life.

I never felt that I belong. I hardly know my family. Perhaps my father's father and my father's sister Clare had been in some way special. My grandfather loved me the most and he expected much from me and I lived up to that.

My life was never monotonous. I started many things with great enthusiasm but something always stopped me. Perhaps I should have persevered. I was always able to fight for other people but not for myself.

My greatest achievement was when I became baptised as a Jehovah witness. It completely changed the way I am looking at things and my expectations. It made my life complete. Other things became less important and I have no time for them.