

BALINT FAMILY PAPERS

2015.160.1

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW
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Descriptive summary

Title: Balint and Foldes family papers

Dates: 1942-2012

Accession number: 2015.160.1

Creator: Balint family

Extent: 1 box (7 folders)

Repository: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW,
Washington, DC 20024-2126

Abstract: Memoirs and other writings of various members of the extended family of Pál (1893-1945) and Ilona (1903-1944) Balint, of Jásberény, Hungary. Includes an English translation of Pál Balint's memoir about his daughter, Zsuzsi (Susan Foldes), written in the years following her departure for the United States in 1939, and hidden following his deportation to Auschwitz in 1944 (but subsequently retrieved by family members and published in Hungary in 2000). Other writings in this collection include autobiographical essays by Susan Foldes, and writings by her American-born daughter, Kathy (Ilona) Foldes, reflecting on the family's experiences in the Holocaust. Also includes two Red Cross letters sent by Susan Foldes to her parents in Hungary, 1942 and 1944, as well as family photographs and a family tree.

Languages: English, Hungarian

Administrative Information

Access: Collection is open for use, but is stored offsite. Please contact the Reference Desk more than seven days prior to visit in order to request access.

Reproduction and use: Collection is available for use. Material may be protected by copyright. Please contact reference staff for further information.

Preferred citation: (Identification of item), (folder number), Balint family papers, 2015.160.1, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC.

Acquisition information: Gift of Katherine Foldes, 2015.

Related archival materials: The memoir by second cousin Gibor Weinberger, which was donated with these materials, is cataloged separately.

Accruals: Accruals may have been received since this collection was first processed, see archives catalog at collections.ushmm.org for further information.

Processing history: Processed by Brad Bauer, April 2015.

Biographical note

Pál (Paul) Balint was born in 1893, and grew up in Budapest, where his father owned a delicatessen. After he finished school, he worked in his father's business, but soon became a wholesale wine merchant, an occupation he pursued before and following World War I. In 1922 he married Ilona, and the following year they had their first child, Zsuzsi (Susan), and a son, Janos (Jancsi, or Johnny) followed in 1926.

By this time, the Balints had settled in the town of Jászberény, about 80 kilometers east of Budapest. Zsuzsi, at the age of 14, sought to attend the town *gymnasium* (or college preparatory school), but was denied due to being Jewish, and instead attended a Catholic convent school, and later, a business school in Budapest. Even with a business education, however, opportunities were limited due to a series of discriminatory laws against Jews, including a restriction on the employment of Jews in white-collar professions by 1939. The family decided to send Zsuzsi to live with Ilona's older sister, Nelly, who lived in New York, in the hope that once Zsuzsi was able to become a citizen, she could sponsor the rest of the family. Now known as Susan, she began attending high school there and learning English.

In Hungary, as the system of forced labor battalions was established, Pál was conscripted in 1940, being sent to work in Tiszafüred, and elsewhere in Hungary. The family continued to receive correspondence regularly from Susan, who provided detailed reports about her new life in America, descriptions that Pál began to incorporate in a memoir about his daughter that he began writing in 1943. In April 1944, during Passover, and following the German takeover of Hungary, the authorities created a Jewish ghetto in Jászberény, and Pál, Ilona and Janos, along with all of the other Jewish residents were forced to move into it. Once there, Pál buried some valuables in a backyard of a home, including the manuscript memoir he had been working on. Later in 1944, Janos was conscripted into a forced labor battalion, and his parents were deported to Auschwitz, where Ilona Balint was killed shortly after arrival, and Pál Balint survived for another year as a forced laborer, until his own death at Buchenwald in 1945.

In New York, Susan had met another Hungarian immigrant, George Foldes, and the two married in 1943, shortly before George joined the U.S. Army. Janos (or Johnny), had been sent as a forced laborer, first to Szolnok, and then other locations, before being liberated by the Soviet forces in December 1944. By mid-1945, George had been able to locate Janos, and Susan re-established contact with her brother. Following unsuccessful attempts to locate their parents, Janos decided to immigrate to the United States, and left Hungary by way of Austria, where members of the American Jewish Joint Distribution

Committee in Linz and gave him a job and a place to live. Eventually he made his way to the New York via Canada. Before leaving Hungary, Janos had returned to Jászberény, and found the manuscript memoir of his father, which he took with him and entrusted with friends in Austria, who later sent it to Susan. Following the war, Susan and George Foldes settled in Fair Lawn, New Jersey, where they raised two children, named Paul and Ilona (also known as Kathy), and where Susan lived until her death in 2001.

Scope and content of collection

The memoir "Remember it Well: A Father's Story," was written by Pal Balint in Jászberény, Hungary from late 1943 until January 1944. The memoir is a retelling of his daughter's life, and his imagining what her life in New York was like, based on the letters he received from her, and he expressed his own longing for the family to be reunited. In the memoir, he refers to the difficult circumstances in Hungary of that period, and how his only communication with Susan was through infrequent letters via the Red Cross. Two of those letters, from June 1942 and October 1943—the latter announcing Susan's marriage to George Foldes—are included in this collection. The published Hungarian version of Pál's memoir, *Családi történet*, which appeared in 2000, was also donated as part of this collection, and is available in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Library.

The essay by Jancsi (John) Balint, "The Story of My Early Life in Hungary," recalls his childhood, his family's reaction to his sister's departure for the United States in 1939, the rising anti-Semitism in their city and throughout Hungary, conscription into forced labor, his postwar trek from Hungary to a displaced persons camp in Austria (Linz-Bindermeichl) and his eventual emigration via Italy.

The series "Original Stories" by Susan Foldes contains various writings, mostly memoirs, compiled by Foldes from 1970 onward, both published and unpublished. The collection also contains a family tree for the Balint family; the text of a 1998 sermon presented by Kathy Foldes at the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Washington County, Oregon, reflecting on her family's experiences during the Holocaust; and photographs of the family.

Another memoir, "My Story: Another Holocaust Survivor," by Gibor Weinberger, a second cousin of Susan Foldes, was donated at the same time, and is cataloged separately.

System of arrangement

The collection is arranged in one series, alphabetically, by document type.

Indexing terms

Name entries:

Balint, Pál (1893-1945)

Balint, Ilona (1903-1944)

Balint, Janos

Foldes, Katherine

Topical entries:

Jews--Hungary--Jászberény--Biography.

Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Hungary--Personal narratives.

CONTAINER LIST

- 1 Correspondence between Susan Balint Foldes, and her mother, Ilona Balint, sent
Via Red Cross, 1942-1944
- 2 Family Tree
- Memoirs and other writings
- 3 Balint, Paul, "A Father's Story—1944," translated by Susan Foldes, 2003
- 4 Balint, Jancsi (John), "The Story of My Early Life in Hungary (1929-1945)
- 5 Foldes, Kathy, "The Legacy of the Holocaust," 2008
- 6 Foldes, Susan, "Original stories," 1970-2001, and undated
- 7 Photographs