

**United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**  
**Archives**

**Oral History Interviews of the  
Kean College of New Jersey  
Holocaust Resource Center**

**Interview with Susan Lederman  
1984  
RG-50.002\*0055**

## **PREFACE**

In 1984, Susan Lederman was interviewed on videotape by Sidney Langer on behalf of the Kean College of New Jersey Holocaust Resource Center. The interview took place in Union, New Jersey and is part of the Research Institute Archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies.

Kean College of New Jersey Holocaust Resource Center created a summary and time-coded notes for the interview. The reader should bear in mind that these finding aids attempt to represent the spoken word in the recorded interview, yet have not necessarily been verified by the interviewee. The finding aids should not be used in place of the interview itself.

Rights to the interview are held by the Kean College of New Jersey Holocaust Resource Center. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum houses a copy of the interview as a result of a contributing organization agreement with the Kean College of New Jersey Holocaust Resource Center. Details concerning the Museum's rights to use and reproduce the interview are contained in the contributing organization agreement.

**Summary of the  
Interview with Susan Lederman  
1984**

Susan Lederman was born in Bratislava, Slovakia on May 28, 1937. She was an only child and her parents had Jewish and secular university educations. Economically, they lived comfortably. In the spring of 1943, Susan was taken to a priest for "conversion" for her protection. Her family lived with a family in Budapest, Hungary before her father decided that they should return home. In the summer of 1944, Susan lived with her godmother while her parents lived in a bombed-out factory. After that, she lived with a Hungarian family in Bratislava until the end of the war. Her parents were able to survive in hiding, along with Susan's great aunt. They were liberated by the Russians in April 1944. The family emigrated to the United States in 1948 when the Communists took over Czechoslovakia. They settled in Queens, New York where her father first worked for a Czech newspaper and then as a clerk for the United Nations Postal Administration.

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**Time-coded notes of the  
Interview with Susan Lederman  
1984**

01:01:00

Susan was born in May 1937 in Bratislava, Slovakia. German was her mother's native tongue. Susan believed that the Jewish birth rate decreased precipitously in the late 1930s. Her father owned a printing shop. They were comfortable, economically.

01:06:00

Her parents had received good Jewish and secular university educations. Her mother attended finishing school in Germany. She believes that the population of her town was 100,000. She could not have survived without Gentile help. She started school in 1943. This was possible because she was "converted." An uncle and his family were shot as partisans in 1944.

01:11:00

There were no deportations until 1944. In the spring of 1943, she stayed with her grandparents in Trnava, Slovakia just an hour from her hometown. In order to ensure her safety, she was taken by a

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German nurse to a priest in a church for "conversion." She understood the sham conversion.

01:16:00

Two (non-?) Jewish families moved into her home. She does not remember much from her first year in school.

01:21:00

At this time, they went to a family in Budapest, Hungary. Her father decided that they should return home, and this saved their lives. The Hungarian family was wiped out. They spent the summer of 1944 with her godmother's family in a small village. The plan then was for her to remain there. This frightened the host family because she knew Jewish children in school and she knew German.

01:26:00

Susan visited her parents in Bratislava in a bombed-out factory where they were living. Then she lived with a Hungarian family in Bratislava. They were willing to take this risk because she had blonde hair, blue eyes, and spoke Hungarian. She had to play a role at age seven and never blow her cover. When neighbors

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visited unannounced and her parents were there, she acted as though she did not know her parents.

01:31:00

Her parents visited about once a month. She was liberated in April 1944. Her parents survived in hiding. They were able to rent a room for themselves and her mother's aunt. They were liberated by the Russians.

01:36:00

She knew that people were being deported for being Jewish. Her father was exempted in order to keep his printing shop operational. Grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins did not survive. They went to an apartment as a family, not to their home or to a displaced persons camp. Czechoslovakia returned to some semblance of normalcy rather readily.

01:41:00

Her father decided to leave in 1948, when the country was becoming Communistic. Her father's brother was able to get them to America. Her parents had kept a kosher home and observed the

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Sabbath. This seemed to stop with the war for both parents. Susan had quite a good education, but no Jewish education.

01:46:00

English became her fifth language. They came to Bayonne, New Jersey where they had relatives, then moved to Queens, New York. She seemed to adjust well to the United States and to school.

01:51:00

She compares her political sophistication in the Eisenhower era with that of her classmates. Even her American family did not care to hear the details about her ordeals at that time.

01:56:00

The Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society of America (HIAS) helped facilitate Jewish immigration.

2:01:00

Her father, a printer and publisher by trade, worked for a Czech newspaper in New York City, New York. Then he became a clerk for the United Nations Postal Administration. She encouraged her

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friends to read the *Diary of Anne Frank*. Their reaction convinced her that there was a gap that could not be bridged.

2:06:00

She has spoken to her children, but not in a sufficiently systematic way. America is an open accepting society. "I do not think a similar pattern could be repeated here."