

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Archives

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

Interview with Renee Cantor
February 26, 1987
RG-50.002*0061

PREFACE

On February 26, 1987, Renee Cantor was interviewed on videotape by Selma Dubnick and Phyllis Tobin 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 Renee Cantor
February 26, 1987

Renee Cantor was born in Brussels, Belgium on August 2, 1926 and was sent to a Sephardic orphanage in England at the age of four. She did not know anything about her family or what happened to them. At age 12, she was sent to an evacuation town to live with a Christian family. After a year, she was moved on to four different towns and families. In each community, she experienced anti-semitism, including the charge, "Christ killer". Renee notes that the religion indoctrinated at the orphanage early in her life stayed with her. At age sixteen, she graduated from high school and went to Manchester, England to stay with cousins. She never really learned what happened to her parents. She applied to go to Palestine to start a new life. She met her husband in England on the day he arrived to go to Manchester Union. Renee came to the United States on December 12, 1946.

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**Time-coded notes of the
Interview with Renee Cantor
February 26, 1987**

01:00:00

Born in Brussels, Belgium. At age 4, she was sent to England to a Sephardic orphanage. A girl from Berlin cried constantly telling stories of slaughter of her family causing fears. Renee had no knowledge of her own family. At 12 she was sent to an evacuation town. She was sent to live with a Christian family. Strange environment caused much anxiety. She fainted and a search was made for her brother who came and then joined Britain's army.

01:06:00

Stayed in one home for one year. Then she was sent to four different villages, four different foster parents and schools. Each place she was accused of "Christ killer", etc. None of which she understood. Government paid for evacuees to stay in homes. Finally gained respect of foster parents.

01:11:00

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Religion so indoctrinated in orphanage that it remained with her. Children in orphanage helped each other but felt lack of parents intensely.

01:16:00

At 16, she graduated high school, went to Manchester. There were cousins in the Syrian community but no one explained what happened to her family. Grandfather from Istanbul who had been her interpreter was sent to Paris where mother was born. Father from Syria, wealthy exporter (much older). Marriage was arranged.

01:21:00

Had many jobs to pay rent but was sick of deprivations for the war. Applied to go to Palestine to start a new life. Had experienced real fear that Hitler would come. Saw Churchill and Mosley.

01:26:00

Met husband the day he arrived in England to go to Manchester Union. Came with war bride transport to the U. S. on Dec, 12, 1946. Experience made her more compassionate. Has four children

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and four grandchildren. A fulfillment of a dream. No longer
orthodox, but very much aware of her Jewishness.