

Oral History with Jerry Czin, Oct. 5, 6, 13, 2020

Summary

Part 1 of 6

Jerry Czin, born Janos Michael Wolf on October 31, 1938 in Budapest, Hungary, describes: a sister, born in January 1945; his mother, Seren née Kasser (born in 1912); father, Deszo (David) Wolf (born in 1900); paternal and maternal grandparents; paternal and maternal aunts, uncles, and cousins; speaking Hungarian at home; his immediate family being mostly secular Jews; his family owning a factory and having a comfortable lifestyle in a fairly modern apartment building, which included an elevator; having modern conveniences such as a radio and telephone; having an au pair; his mother owning a store nearby; recalling his father as handsome and a good athlete; his uncle, Alexander Kasser, being an assistant to Raul Wallenberg.

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Leading a comfortable life until Hungary's late entry into the war in March 1944; one of his uncles, a Hasidic Jew, refusing assistance in hiding from the Nazis and his family perishing; living as a Christian after the Germany-Hungary pact; his father being impressed into a forced labor camp; his mother having close calls at Nazi (or Arrow Cross) checkpoints; (N.B. Czin often refers to German Nazis and Hungarian Arrow Cross fascists interchangeably as Nazis.); his entire family, including religious grandmother who reverted to Judaism after the war, becoming Baptist Christians; his father returning on leave from his labor brigade in March 1944, and this being the last time he saw his father; being hungry after the family went into hiding; his mother wearing the Juden star before her Christian conversion, after which Jerry and his extended family moved to a new location to hide their identities; his mother giving birth to his sister in January 1945 as the Russians were arriving; his father probably dying of typhus in the labor camp in February 1945 (this later confirmed).

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[Begins with corrections, additions, and spellings to some earlier comments, including family names and placenames.]

Describes moving to the last of the family hiding places, in 1945, which was located on a wealthy Karoly estate, and which he believed at the time to be a convent; returning to Budapest after the war; his mother deciding in about 1946 to leave Hungary with Jerry and his sister because of the growing Soviet-communist system; arriving by train at a DP camp, about 40 km outside of Munich; his mother meeting and marrying Jerry's stepfather;

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Attending Hebrew school in the DP camp; arriving in the U.S. and building a life.

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Shows Photos. [2 mins]

Part 6 of 6

Describes maternal grandparents' immigration to the U.S. in 1956.