

## **Summary of Oral History: Susan Gonda**

**RG#: RG- 50.084.0004**

### **This Summary was written by a USHMM Volunteer 05/2022**

Susan Gonda (née Neufeld) born in a small town in the Carpathian Mountains of Czechoslovakia, November 21, 1923. Her family consisted of her parents, a sister and two brothers. Her father, Nikolaus Neufeld, owned two barrel factories. Her family was wealthy and prior to the war she attended school, rode her bicycle, swam in the river and walked along the town promenade.

The town had a population of 20,000 and Jewish and non-Jewish residents of the town mixed. There were two synagogues in the town. Her Father died in 1938. In 1938, Hungarians arrived and their lives were changed. Jews were beaten and brutalized. When Susan was 19, in late 1943 or 1944, the Germans arrived. Ghettos were established in her father's factory and a brick factory. Her family had false papers and she and her brother escaped. Her Mother remained with Susan's sister and her sister's children, Judy and a 2 year old boy. The wife of one of the factory workers took Susan's niece Judy the day before Susan's mother, sister and nephew were taken by Hungarian police on a wagon. In 1944, Susan escaped to Budapest and used her false papers to get a job in her family's factory in Budapest. A worker denounced her and she was imprisoned by the Gestapo in May, 1944. She was interrogated about family members, beaten and a knife cut her heel.

After being detained, she was kept in a brick factory. Some Jewish people that she was held with committed suicide. She was transported in a cattle wagon (railroad car) to Auschwitz arriving at night and survived selection. They had to walk through the mud, get undressed, showered, then were rushed to another room where she was given shoes and some type of clothing. She was shaved and placed in a building with other women in Birkenau. Described Appell (roll call) and that they were constantly being counted. Eventually, they were permitted to leave the building and were taken to Světlá (Lichtewerden in German), a thread factory and subcamp of Auschwitz-Birkenau. The walk to the factory was made very difficult due to the wooden shoes she had to wear.

At some point, German guards left the camp and Russian soldiers arrived. Russian soldiers did not want them to return home. Makes it to Bratislava then to Budapest where she meets her husband. One brother returned and she found her niece Judy (the young girl taken by the factory worker's wife.) Married in Switzerland, immigrated to Venezuela with her niece. Very difficult to immigrate to the United States. In immigrating to Venezuela, they had to conceal their Judaism. Immigrated to the United States.

### **Part 2 of 2 Summary**

Pictures of her family home, family members and an envelope containing a letter her Father wrote to his sister in America.