

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

William Helmreich Oral History Collection

**Interview with Joe Schlesinger and Edith Schlesinger
January 25, 1990
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of an audio taped interview with Joe Schlesinger and Edith Schlesinger conducted by William Helmreich on January 25, 1990 as research for his book *Against all odds: Holocaust survivors and the successful lives they made in America*. The interview was given to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on Oct. 30, 1992 and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

JOE SCHLESINGER AND EDITH SCHLESINGER January 25, 1990

WH: What kind of home did you grow up in?

JS: I was born in Poland and raised in Kielce on March 20, 1922. My father had a wholesale textile place. We were six children. My father died one year before the war at the age 46, a young man. I was in Auschwitz and was sent to Monowitz. I was there for a year.

WH: How did you get to America?

JS: I wrote a letter to the Forwards and one of my relatives read it. Ten days later I got a letter from him.

WH: Where are you from?

ES: I was born in Poland on June 6, 1928 and was eleven when the war broke out. My father was a small businessman; there were six of us. I was taken away in 1942 to Czestochowa where I worked in a munitions factory. I was not in a concentration camp. After the war I learned my brother had survived and was in Israel. He told me not to come there. It was during the 1948 War of Independence.

WH: How did you get to America?

ES: By boat on the Marine Tiger. The HIAS greeted us and took us to their building at 425 Lafayette Street. My uncle, my mother's brother, a wealthy dress manufacturer, picked us up in two cars, and took us to their house in Brooklyn where we stayed for six months. They treated us very well.

WH: What kind of work did you do here?

JS: I became an upholsterer. I worked very hard for twenty years in one place and we're still very close with the people there. I worked my way up.

WH: How do you feel about the other minorities: Blacks, Hispanics and others?

JS: They could have whatever they want. The problem is laziness.

ES: I lived in a one and a half room apartment, a sixth floor walkup with a bathroom in the hall. But I cleaned it and took care of it. On a Friday night we brought over friends. We didn't go begging. We could have gone to the HIAS for help, but we didn't. I can't take money if I know I'm taking it from someone else. I

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was eleven when I was not allowed to go to school anymore and it was the worst thing in the world to me. I'm not saying all, but the majority of them don't care. For me, if I couldn't afford something, I didn't get it.

Conclusion of Interview