

Interviewee:	<u>HERLING</u> , Pearl	Date:	March 16, 1981
Interviewer:	Josey G. Fisher		
Audio tapes:	2 English	Transcript:	1 vol. (unpaged) English
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SUMMARY

Pearl Herling was born in Budapest, Hungary August 24, 1924 to a religious upper middle class family. Her father was in the wholesale textile business. She describes her family history and pre-war life, antisemitism and discrimination against Jews which peaked in 1938. She also describes the increasingly harsh restrictions against Hungarian Jews between 1940 and 1944 and the creation of ghettos ("Yellow Star Houses"), labor battalions, and cruelty exhibited by Hungarian Nazis. Her father disappeared and never came back.

Pearl gives detailed descriptions of her many efforts to stay alive: she never wore the mandatory yellow star, avoided transport to a labor camp, posed as a Gentile using false papers she typed herself, through a bluff managed to get herself and all the people in her building into one of the Swedish "safe" houses established by Raoul Wallenberg and also obtain *Schutzpässe*. Just before this building was raided, she managed to join her sister at a labor camp in Kelenföld, run by Hungarian Nazis. She describes an incredible vignette of how she, her sister, and her sister's two young children avoided a roundup, then got papers classifying them as refugees in Russian-occupied Hungary. Her mother and other family members survived under the protection of the head of a German labor camp. She describes her family's continued struggle living in Budapest posing as non-Jews using false papers, starvation, and near escapes from detection. She refers to a special transport of Hungarian Jews from Bergen-Belsen to Switzerland and a failed attempt to exchange Jews for trucks. She witnessed a death march from Buda. She met and married her second husband while both were posing as non-Jews, and relates how difficult it was for him to get his son back from a Catholic family that sheltered him.

Pearl was liberated by the Russians in January 1945. She gives a very extensive and graphic account of her experiences in Hungary under Russian occupation, and many attempts to flee. She also mentions Russian soldiers raping women. Pearl details her husband's flight from Soviet authorities while she was running two businesses. She describes her own harrowing attempted escapes from Budapest-- one with her sedated infant, another when she was separated from her seven-year old step-son and got arrested, and her final escape to Vienna using an Israeli passport. Pearl and her husband survived in Vienna for two years but experienced discrimination. They emigrated to the United States in 1950.

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SUBJECT HEADINGS

World War, 1939 – 1945 – Personal narrative, Jewish
Hungary-History – Russian occupation
Jews, Hungarian
Persecution
Antisemitism
Survival skills
“Yellow Star House” – Budapest, Hungary
Safe Houses – Swedish
Schutzpasses
False Identity
False Papers