

**RG-50.944.0092**

**April 29, May 3 and 15, 2019**

**Budapest, Hungary**

**Summary**

Julianna Breuer Földes, was born on December 14, 1928, in Pécs, Hungary. Her father was Miksa Breuer who worked for a wine merchant, Benkő, as a wine purchaser. Her mother was Anna Fischer. They had eight children: Margit (1908), married to Simon Neumann, in Léva (Slovakia until 1939); Ilona (1911), Jenő (?); Magdolna (1915); Lili (1917); Géza (1920); Miklós (died in infancy); György (1925).

The parents were religious, especially her father. They kept a kosher household. They rented an apartment in Harangöntő St., close to the city center where many Jewish families lived: she mentioned the Schwitzer family, Lili Klein, the Schlesingers, Kasziner, the *mohel*, and her friends Marika Roth, the daughter of the richest man in Pécs (leather factory owner), and Zsuzsi Lőwinger. They also had Christian neighbors and friends; her mother's best friend was a Christian woman, Mrs. Vörös, wife of the local butcher, who helped them with food in 1944. Her father traveled a lot for the wine business. In 1940, he had died unexpectedly of cancer. After her father's death, her adult siblings, most of them living and working in Budapest, supported her mother, her brother György, who had physical and mental disability, and herself. In 1942, György was called up for forced labor like the rest of her brothers and died in an unknown location.

For four years, she went to the Jewish elementary school. She continued in the Calvinist middle school for girls. Jews had to pay double tuition. There were only three other Jewish girls in school: Marika Roth, Lili Klein, and Zsuzsi Lőwinger. There was no discrimination in school. She remembered Sunday, March 19, 1944 when the Germans arrived in town. Her mother did not allow her to go out, and the school year ended.

Soon they had to wear the Yellow Star. Rationing was introduced, but Jews did not get ration cards. Her mother's friend brought food for them.

In May 1944, they had to move to the ghetto, which was established in the apartment buildings of the Railroad Association. Ghettoization was announced by placards and public radio. A few hours before, a civilian official came to their apartment to tell them what time they had to gather on the street. Her brother Géza, who was at home from forced labor at the time, fled and went into hiding when he was called up for forced labor again.

In the ghetto, she and her mother lived with three other families in an apartment. There were ca. 3,500 Jews in Pécs, but only elderly Jewish men, and women with children were in the ghetto. The rumor was that they were going to work in Germany. There was one wedding in the ghetto; Judit Spira and György Krausz married, because the rumor spread that young couples would not be deported. There was a communal kitchen in the ghetto where everybody ate. They also could volunteer for work: she did gardening, and was also in the crew that took food to wealthy Jews who were in the police prison. At the time, she did not know that they were being tortured.

She developed the attitude that she did not care what was coming. Her only treasure, a gold ring with onyx, she did not give up, but asked her father's former colleague, Mr. Bajcsik for safekeeping (he gave it back to her when she returned). Before they were taken from the

ghetto, midwives came and searched all women and girls, even small ones. At the end of June or beginning of July [June 28-29], they had to walk from the ghetto to large horse stables outside the city [Lakics Military Barracks, horse stables of the cavalry] where they stayed under very crowded and unsanitary conditions. Jews from nearby towns were also there, as well as hospital and insane asylum patients. They got rotten sausages and bread. On the way there and, a few days later, on the same way back to the train station, the inhabitants of Pécs watched them, mostly silently. *Levente* (paramilitary organization of young men under conscription age) guarded and threatened them on the route. The entrainment was on July 5 [July 4]. Gendarmes urged 70-80 people into the wagons. She was not yet 16, her mother 53. Some people died, and one young woman, Lili Mád became crazy, screaming all the time. Their cantor, Géza Erster sang for the dead. They did not know where the train was going. At the border, German SS took over the guard detail.

They were relieved when they arrived one night. Reflectors lit the ramp, and people in striped uniforms entered the train and directed them what to do. They spoke Polish. A band was playing military marches.

She said Mengele selected them [as she learned later], and a few SS officers were standing around him. She was separated from her mother, who was put on a truck. She was shaven, but not tattooed, not showered, and she kept her own clothes. She walked with a group to Birkenau. They got postcards to send to a neighbor or friend with the message that they had arrived and were doing well. She sent it to Mrs. Vörös, her mother's friend. She did not remember her barrack number, but said that it was across from the main entrance. They slept on the floor. The next morning, there was *Zehlappell*, repeated twice daily. They were standing for hours in the hot sun. There were some women from Pécs, some from Győr, from other Hungarian cities, as well as from Slovakia. There was a shower and they got a little piece of soap that everybody called "Jewish soap," and the rumor was that it was made from the fat of dead Jews.

Two weeks later, there was another selection. She lost weight and was selected for gas – not at all aware at the time of gas and crematoria, although there was a strange smell all the time. She described how she sat naked for hours with a large group of women in the changing room that led to the showers – and as she later learned to the gas chamber - waiting for water, so they were told. All of a sudden someone grabbed her and pulled her out of the group. It was her sister Margit who recognized her when she walked by the entrance. Margit quickly took a prisoner's garb and wooden shoes, ordered her to be quiet, and pushed her into her own group. She showed on a drawing in the Auschwitz Album approximately where and how this event happened. She went with Margit to Margit's barracks where women selected for work were located, among them women from Léva. She also found Klára Stark whom she knew from Pécs. She said that she never discussed this episode with Margit then or after the war, and, initially she did not even realize that Margit had saved her life. They were together for the rest of the war, and Margit took care of her.

In a couple of days, still in July 1944, they were transported to Lippstadt [North-Rhine Westphalia, less than 40 miles east of Dortmund], Germany. They worked 12-hour shifts, as she said, in an I.G. Farben factory [two camps in Lippstadt belonged to the Buchenwald camp system; the prisoners worked for the Westfälische Metall-Industrie AG, and the Lippstädter Metallwerke GmbH, both war production factories].

The conditions in Lippstadt were much better than in Birkenau; they slept in bunk beds, took showers, had soap and towels. The buildings were in the middle of a forest and were heated in winter. They wore prisoner's uniform with a big "J" on the back. SS men guarded them, and, as it turned out at the end, one of them was a Hungarian-speaking ethnic German, which explained why the SS always knew of the prisoners' vaguely formulated escape plans. They were rude, but not cruel. They had food three times a day; not enough, not good, but edible. They worked either during the day or at night, drilling machine components. The German master in the factory told them: "even if Hitler loses the war, you will perish!" There were male laborers of different nationalities, Italians and Ukrainians, but they worked elsewhere in the camp.

In 1945, bombardment became frequent and sound of fighting came ever closer. Toward the end of March, the Germans emptied the camp and set the prisoners on a foot march that lasted about five days. They usually marched in late evenings and nights, avoiding the main roads. She was totally exhausted, and did not want to go any further, but Margit and another woman dragged her on. She said there were about 100-150 women who left Lippstadt and 80-100 alive at liberation.

There is a book on the march from Lippstadt, as the interviewer mentioned, by Teréz Rudnóy: *Women Being Set Free (Szabaduló asszonyok, 1947, 2011)*, in which the author described that the cart with the provision and the female SS guards sitting on it was pulled by two women. One of them, Sári Blonde, became exhausted and died on the road. The other woman, Lola Vörös kept pulling the cart. Mrs. Földes confirmed that she saw the cart pulled by women and remembered their names [not clear whether she remembered the names because she read the book or had heard the names mentioned at the time].

At last, on April 1, 1945 an American tank appeared on the road. They were at the outskirts of the town, Kaunitz. The Americans provided some protection from the potential danger of retreating German troops and allowed the prisoners to occupy the empty homes in town. They spent more than a month in Kaunitz.

One of the American officers was originally from Prague, and he managed to get a bus for the Czech and Slovak prisoners to Prague. Mrs. Földes went with her sister via Prague to Léva. Her sister's husband, Simon Neumann, who had fled from forced labor, was already at home. She spent a couple of weeks in Léva. After that she traveled via Budapest to Pécs. In Budapest, she registered at Bethlen Square at JOINT, and received food, clothing and train ticket to Pécs. She met her sister Lili in Budapest. In Pécs, her brother Géza was already at home. Their apartment was occupied. She stayed with their Christian neighbor, "Aunty Báder" who took care of her. She and her brother were waiting for their mother's return.

Of her siblings, Magdolna and her family perished in Auschwitz and her brother György in forced labor, at an unknown time and place. Margit and her husband remained in Léva and had two children after the war. Jenő was in forced labor in the Soviet Union, and also in a Soviet labor camp, and returned in 1948. Ilona was deported late to Auschwitz, because she worked in the Tungsram factory that was involved in war production. Ilona survived and settled in the area of Balassagyarmat, married Emil Weiss, and had two children after the war. Lili was also in Auschwitz and in other places that Mrs. Földes did not remember.

In 1946, she married István Földes. He was in forced labor and was injured. He stole a German bicycle to get home. Russian soldiers captured him, but he managed to escape and made it

home. He had a textile store, where she also worked. After their business was nationalized (1949), they moved to Budapest. She had three children, born in 1947, 1948, and 1957. Her husband worked in the Corvin Department Store.

She kept her faith and some of her religious customs. She still visits the synagogue in Dohány St.