**Susan Singerman – Life Before The War**

In this very short section Susan Singerman tells of her birth in Hungary

Int: Today is Saturday 14th August 2010 and I’m here to interview my mother-in-law Susan Singerman. When and where were you born and what was your name at birth?

Susan: I was born in Western Hungary which was called Transnubia in a small town called Székesfehérvár. My maiden name was Gerofi.

**Susan Singerman – Life During The War**

Susan notes that Jews in Hungary were only rounded up in 1944. She speaks of her family and herself being transported to Auschwitz but explains how it was that she survived and the others died. She describes how she was chosen to be part of a work detail in Lippstadt in Germany and describes her living and working conditions at that time.

Int: I know you came to Scotland as a result of the events of the 30s. Would you like to tell us a little about growing up and what happened to you, which resulted in you coming to Scotland?

Susan: Hungary was an ally of the Nazis and so until 1944 although there were a number of anti-Jewish laws, you were all right; and then we found out or I don’t know how I found out later, the Regent Horthy tried to get Hungary out of the war either to remain neutral or by joining the allies, and the Nazis got wind of this and that’s why they occupied Hungary because nobody could dare afford (allow) that by then, by 1944 when things weren’t going too well for the Nazis. So they occupied Hungary on 15th March 1944 and it shows you for instance in the Warsaw Ghetto if you think about it, it took years for people to be sent to Auschwitz or any other of the death camps, but in Hungary from 15th March the Germans came in and by 17th or 18th June I was in Auschwitz so three months and three days, you know the speed of it.

Int : So were you moved from your own house into somebody else’s house in Hungary?

Susan: We had our own house of course. It got bombed (later in the war).

Int : So you had to move? Susan: It is no longer there.

Int : Once the Nazis took over Hungary what happened to your family and yourself?

Susan : As I said, the speed at which things were going. 15th March they came in and 16th March you already had to wear the yellow star and then you had to move to what was called the ghetto, which was the street the gypsies lived in, and so presumably in other cases the gypsies moved in but it so happened that (there was) a flat at the very end of the street which was almost out of the street so it was dicey whether they would allow us to take it; it belonged to my granny’s chiropodist so she moved in to our house and we moved into one room.

Int : Was that you and your mother and your grandmother?

Susan: My parents, my sister and my grandmother. My younger sister is over there. [Susan pointed to a framed picture of her younger sister with her].

Int : 5 of you in one room?

Susan : Yes

Int : And then very quickly you were all sent to Auschwitz?

Susan: We were there perhaps a month and then we had to move to a disused brick factory beside a railway station. I don’t why they had built these, presumably for transportation, beside the railway station, but it was apparently standard practice that the Nazis and therefore then the Hungarians put people in there and there was of course no water and you could take 50 kilograms of water with you but of course you had to have a sleeping bag because you were lying on the ground and there was no water of course and they brought in water every day.

My father was in charge of distributing the water to people and we were there a very short time and then we had to line up and the cattle trucks came up and I remember the writing on it: seven horses or I think eight; 90 of us went into one carriage and you won’t believe this, but there was one bucket with water to drink and one for other sanitary purposes. By this time you had to hand in all valuables, even radios and things, but of course nobody handed in everything. People, like my father too, buried things in the garden, which later, some of it came out and some of it didn’t – others had been found by others. We were lucky in a way that my father was in charge of the carriage we were in that nobody went mad there; some people went mad in the course of the journey and others committed suicide, so it was one of the worst parts of it, because you were still with your family and so sad to see your granny in those conditions – it was really heart breaking.

Then when we arrived at Auschwitz. I had never heard of Auschwitz. Auschwitz is the German name given to it; Oświęcim was the Polish name. When we got off the train, the men had to go one way straight away and the women and children had to line up and Dr Mengele, the Angel of Death, as he was nicknamed was waiting at the head of the row. I don’t know if he attended every selection but when the Hungarian trains came in there were two or three transports every day and the rate of survival in those conditions, and not going straight to the gas chamber, was (extremely low); and going forward towards Mengele, I was on the left hand side and my sister, who I think then was about 11, was beside me, and then my mother and her sister who was, I think, something like eight years younger than my mother, supporting on either side of my grandmother, and then my younger cousin, who was the same age as my sister, at the end; and then, as we were coming up, if my sister had been on my mother’s other side then she would have come with me; but my sister was too young and Mengele by this time was either tired of it all, or wanted to hurry, so he didn’t say, “You and you and you”; because I was handy there on the left, I went one way and of course I didn’t know then but my mother and my sister and about 90% I think of all the others went straight to the gas chambers.

Int : You were young enough to work?

Susan : Yes I suppose so, and well, as they lined us up, and those who Mengele chose for life, I suppose; we went along past barbed wire and people, shaven headed, jumping up and doing it seemed like some kind of a weird dance and shouting in Hungarian I suppose but it was incomprehensible and so I said, by then I had found two of my friends, I said this must be the lunatic asylum; but half an hour later we also had our heads shaved and they had taken our clothes away and they sent us to what was showers, and the gas chambers also had showers, on them, and they were told that they were going to showers, except that there, gas came from the (showers) taps and with us it was water.

Then, before we left Auschwitz, they put us into a building or a large room I suppose, well, it had to be quite large to contain 500 of us, called gas chamber, and we went in and we had to sit down and there was a low sort of seating in a circle and by that time we were in such a confused state of mind that we were making corny jokes about, “Wonder when they’ll turn the taps on” and so on. However I can’t remember who, perhaps it was an SS Sergeant, or somebody, said that we were going into Western Germany on a long train journey, but if the Red Cross, or anybody comes, and they ask us about our parents or anything, if anybody says anything that they shouldn’t say, they will be shot. However, we didn’t get the Red Cross to ask.

Int : This was after you spending some time in Auschwitz?

Susan : Three months

Int : You were three months there. You didn’t work during that period?

Susan : Oh no. The worst thing was that there was no water. I was in Birkenau actually, which was for the women, and there was no water, and there was a kind of ditch filled with water by the barbed wire, and you can manage without drink, you know, you can get other drinks, you know, but the less there is the more you want it, so some people went and drank from it and they ended up with typhus.

Int : What happened after you arrived and were shaved?

Susan: They shaved us all. Then they sent us to this gas chamber kind of.

Int : You washed there?

Susan : No, there were no showers in that one.

Int : What was a typical day like in Auschwitz?

Susan: Say, ‘Appell’, which is roll call, at about 4 o’clock I think, in the morning, a shot came through one of the windows. 500 people in one side of a barrack does not give a lot of room to lie down, you couldn’t lie down, you sat on the floor, obviously there were no beds or anything, and we sat back to back with somebody else and supported each other sitting, and then you had to go out to roll call and you stood come hail or shine – they counted us and they counted us and they re-counted us until – I think it tallied every time, but still they (insisted).

Int : How long did roll call last?

Susan: Well they were interrupted by getting a drink of brown water, which went for coffee, and a drink of sort of yellow or reddish liquid, which went for soup, but otherwise it was until about 6 in the evening.

Int :You just stood and they would go round and count you all the time? That would have taken a long time, standing while they just kept counting you.

Susan: Oh, absolutely.

Int: Were you standing there the whole day? Did people not collapse from exhaustion? Did they not fall down?

Susan: You had no names – I was number 152.

Int : Go back to where you were before – you were told you were being sent to Western Germany. What happened then?

Susan: They eventually got us on a train and we arrived in Western Germany in Lippstadt, and we were assigned to work there in an iron and metal works, and I don’t know if it was a week or two weeks, but a very short time after we arrived I was called as I was carrying something in the factory and it was a stone floor and my glasses fell off and broke, so our own Camp Commandant was a girlhood friend of my mother’s so I went to see her and I said well this is what happened and she said, “Oh well you can’t go to the factory then.” I said, “But why not?” I said, “I’m not blind and it is a very difficult machine work, that’s all I have to do, raise my arm up and down” and she said, “Oh, but you’re as blind as a bat and you cannot go back,” so I didn’t, and I went along into the German kitchen every day.

Int : Do you think she did that to help you out of the ammunitions? Did she do it on purpose to make your life easier?

Susan: Who?

Int : The Camp Commandant, did she do that to make your life easier. Was it an easier life in the kitchen?

Susan: I don’t know for what reason or if they just needed somebody. It sounds absolutely disgusting now but whatever the Germans left on their plates I ate it, but you were hungry. I managed to get hold of a pair of overalls and tied them at the ankle, and when I was sent to the stores for, I don’t know, anything, I’d pinch a couple of onions and carrots and things and let them go right down to my ankles; so that when I had to go back to the camp and they sort of felt me around, they didn’t go right down to the ankles so.

Int : That was brave of you.

Susan: I know

Int : Did you then share that with your friends?

Susan: Yes of course, I took it to them and there came a jaundice outbreak and I had to go into Lippstadt every day with an SS Sergeant to collect a big container of some special food that was for those who had the jaundice. The only trouble was that whilst they had the jaundice, they couldn’t eat, and by the time they were better they didn’t get the special food, so it was a very difficult situation. It is impossible to describe the feeling I had when I went into Lippstadt and I saw buses and trams and women pushing prams, you know, that life had gone on when we were slaves.

Int : It is bizarre isn’t it like two parallel lives – one normal life totally ignoring another section of the population.

Susan: Yes. So I had to work in the German kitchen, and collected this food for the jaundiced and by this time there was quite a number of them. I also had to sweep the grounds, scrub one of the SS Officer’s rooms and also a Sergeant’s room and he was very kind, he left an apple on the table and pointed to it and said “Eat it” and I was afraid if I touched it then I would be, bang bang, but I ate it and nothing happened. So you know they weren’t all horrible; most of them were. I feel no pity for any of the Nazis. One day I was leaning in through the window into the jaundice room talking and suddenly I felt myself sailing through the air, because one of the Germans came up behind me and kicked me on the backside.

Then just in time for me to catch jaundice, the Camp Commandant decided that that was too much, there were too many, and he lined us all up and when it came to me, he pulled my lower eyelid down and said, “Day shift!”, so I was back in the factory but day shift only.

Int: Were you and your friends not sabotaging the equipment that you were preparing? Did you try and damage the things you were making for the Nazis, I remember you said you did.

Susan: That was a bit later, firstly I was with the Italians, a monster of a machine, I don’t know, I just can’t remember now what it was. First of all they got their meal in the factory and instead of two meals they took up three and we had a sort of dark red bowl and people wrote in yellow paint their number on it, and mine was 152.

The Italians collected one more than they needed, collected three instead of two, and they put it into a bowl and the Germans sooner or later discovered it, and I was terribly lucky that the bowl with the number on it, one had the pudding in and the other covering it, was the one with my number on it, because he threw that away and took the food away so he didn’t know it was mine, so I was lucky that way.

Int : I believe you were finally forced onto a death march as the war drew to a close, as the Germans eventually lost the war or were losing the war. Did you remain in Lippstadt or did you have to leave?

Susan: In January 1945 about 70 people who were ill with various things were sent away by train, they said to Bergen Belsen, didn’t mean a thing, and now at the end of March or the middle of March I suppose, a rat poison incident and falling asleep when

Int : Tell Angela about the rat poison.

Susan : I told you that that our Camp Commandant was a girlhood friend of my mother, so she expected me to go and see her at least once a week, but by this time the air raids were absolutely non stop, practically, so I was on permanent day shift, but my friends were one week day shift and one week night shift, and when they were on night shift then they obviously slept during the day. When the air raids came the Germans were desperate to get to the shelter, even the Polish guest workers, and everybody went to the shelter except the Jews; we had to go back to our camp right beside the factory. We had to go back there.

They put on the high voltage, and ran to the shelter and that was that. We knew that we were going to be evacuated, so I went to see Renee, that was the name of the Camp Commandant, and yet another raid, all the lights out and as I came out I said, “I must get back to our room”, and coming out of her room, which led on to a biggish room where the bread was distributed, and in the dark I bumped into this cupboard, and as I tried to find my way, the door opened and there was this big carton, and it was open. I put my hand inside and it felt like small (granules), the size of peas perhaps, and I tasted one. Stupid of me, I could have fell down dead on the spot but you didn’t think of these things so, I tasted it, and immediately I felt a raging thirst so I didn’t take any more but I took it with me, and I sort of made my way back somehow slowly to my room and I said, “Anybody hungry?”.

Ask a stupid question! I said, “OK then, hold out your hand” and they said “What is it?”, and I said “I don’t’ know; it’s some kind of cereal that I found in the cupboard outside Renee’s room”. So in the dark, the complete darkness, people held out their hands and I poured, until it was finished, but I had very little because as I say it made me very thirsty and another trip down to the end of the corridor where the water was, I just didn’t fancy, so when the lights came on, we looked at the box and it said Rat Poison. Heavens! We didn’t have a doctor but there was a nurse in charge so we went along, about seven or eight of us, whom I treated so kindly, and the nurse said, “Well, you have only just eaten it so it will still be in your stomach undigested so make yourself sick and bring it up and you’ll be OK”.

So we said, “Yes, OK”, and everybody duly brought back what they had eaten, except two people, a girl called Bianca or Blanche and me, so we tried – we pushed spoons down our throat but nothing doing. Then because we were being evacuated and supposed to be walking to Belsen, we sort of forgot about it, and we marched only by night, and during the day they put us into some kind of barn and the second, I think it was the third day, that we were liberated by the Americans, and this girl, Blanche, said to me then, the Italians – I said they had given me a pouch with the lipstick and so on, well I took out the comb and broke it in two so each barrack had a half a comb, because you only had this much hair but it was all the more precious.

As I say, we got liberated, and then Blanche said, “Listen, give me your comb, because I haven’t had a comb in my hair for I don’t know how long”, so I gave her the comb and she started brushing and it was absolutely horrifying

Int : Did her hair fall out with the rat poison?

Susan: It came out. She became completely bald, but not the way we were bald when the Germans shaved us. She was a very dark girl and you could tell from when she had hair, completely black, and her eyebrows still black but she was getting absolutely hysterical (because the hair was coming out in her comb). So somebody said there was a cottage hospital a few miles away, so we got hold of a couple of bicycles.

First of all, Bianca’s German wasn’t very good, and also I was the supplier of the evil stuff, so I felt (a responsibility). So we went along, we cycled, and they took her, and they massaged her head; they gave her cream and I interpreted and so after, I don’t know, perhaps half an hour or an hour, they came to me and with a big smile on their face, one of the doctors said, “Now, I can’t tell you what is going to happen, because I don’t know if the roots have been destroyed or not. If the roots have been destroyed, then she is not going to get her hair back, but if they haven’t, she might, but it’s going to be a long job; and so it was – it took about six months for her hair to start growing again.

Int : Going back to Auchswitz, you went to a few selections before Mengele when you were at Auschwitz, didn’t you?

Susan: Not a few, perhaps two or three

Int : Was there not one when you said you thought you heard your mother’s voice when you lost your glasses?

Susan : I don’t know if this happened, probably not every time, but at that particular selection, if you wore glasses, you weren’t chosen. You were left behind in Auschwitz. So, we were in row 5, and the first one got chosen to go, you know was taken out of the row and made to stand against the barrack and the second one was my friend Eva, she is still in Hungary.

Then it was Yoli, and then it was me and a cousin, not of mine, but a cousin of Choisi’s (Susan’s cousin, who survived the war, as she had emigrated to Palestine) or an aunt of Choisi’s, who was behind us. She was my mother’s age, I suppose, and we were all chosen. Yoli was behind me, she was very, very small and sort of thin and when the three of us had been chosen and it came to the row where Yoli was behind Mengele, we all sort of stuck out our chests, but before that when it came to my row, I didn’t know that my mother was dead, that she had been put to the gas chamber half an hour after we arrived, but I swear to this day I heard my mother’s voice saying “Off with those glasses!”, and I took them off and sort of pushed them with my feet under me, I had to stand in my birthday suit, and

Int : That saved your life? With glasses you would have been selected for the gas chamber?

Susan : I don’t know for sure.

Int : That’s what you heard?

Susan: I think Mengele changed his mind. He was very interested in experiments with twins.

Int : What did you say you did with your food cutting it up? How did you manage? Did they give you a square of bread a day in Auschwitz?

Susan: We got one slice of bread a day. That was in the evening and it was one of those things, I was obsessed by the idea of, they wanted to make animals of us, well I’ll not let them. So that’s why for instance, one day I’d think in Hungarian, the next day I’d think in German, the next day I’d think in French. I had a number of languages. I had practically no Hebrew but I had some words.

Int : So you what did you do with your bread to prove you were human?

Susan: What I did was, the way I’d think in these languages, I also decided that one day I used to get the bread and wolf it down

Int : Most people wolfed it down immediately?

Susan: No not everybody, somebody you know

Int : Judith Rosenberg?

Susan: How do you know?

Int : You told me before

Susan: Did I?

Int : What did Judith do?

Susan: She cut it up into dainty little squares so she had her breakfast: she had her three course lunch: and she had her three course dinner.

Int : Did you not cut yours into pieces as well, you didn’t wolf yours down right away, did you? Did you not break it in to pieces, not as small as Judith’s, but did you not keep some for later?

Susan: I don’t know, but the thing is you were risking it getting stolen

Int : I thought you normally would break yours up into pieces and have some at one time, some of it later, I think you told me that.

**Susan Singerman – Immigration**

Susan explains that she had some distant relatives in Scotland and that is why she went there after the war was over

Int: When you came to Scotland, how old were you then?

Susan: I think I was 19.

Int : You were liberated by the Americans and somehow you ended up here in Scotland. How was it you ended up in Scotland?

Susan: It was because I had a great-uncle and a great-aunt in Scotland. I don’t know if you know Mrs Kubie?

Int : So who was your great-aunt and uncle?

Susan: Dr and Mrs Banyai. They lived in Ayr at the time and I discovered meanwhile that I had my cousin to whom I gave my papers; I was Chairman or Vice Chairman of HaNoa HaTsioni (a Zionist Youth Group).

Int : In Hungary?

Susan: Yes, in Hungary. So they sent us some false papers for me and for a number of reasons I didn’t want to go.

Int : False papers so you could emigrate to Palestine as it was then?

Susan: Yes, I suppose so, but it didn’t specify on it of course.

Int : So you chose not to go to Palestine?

Susan: No, if you went illegally then you had to go to Cyprus and I felt nothing on earth would put me behind barbed wires again so again I was too young and I was too naive and there was a regiment called the Jewish Brigade and I don’t know, some of them came over, they were in Italy at the end of the war, and they came over and took me translating and interpreting and so on, and they thought of the great idea of marrying one of them, one of the Jewish Brigade, but in name only, but as I say I was too young and too naive.

Int : What age were you then?

Susan: 19, but I had lived a very sheltered life in Hungary. Anyway

**Susan Singerman – Settling In**

Susan describes how she considered going to Palestine after the war but how, in the end, she came to Scotland and worked first as a trainee nurse.

Int: You were going to explain how you came to Ayr.

Susan: We were going to do this business of the false marriage. They sent away the Regiment; they had come to Belgium and they sent them back to what was then Palestine, not yet Israel, and so I didn’t know what to do and my cousin, the one who had taken my papers, she had got to Palestine. She was blonde and blue eyed and no way did she look Jewish but with the false papers, there were four of them altogether, they went to Budapest and they waited and then they were sent. They started a journey. They were going to go through Rumania and hopefully get a ship and so

Int: She went to Israel on these false papers…

Susan: And there were lists circulating and eventually she found that I was alive. She called herself Shoshana because she thought I had also died in the camps.

Int: She called herself Shoshana (Choisi) as in your name because that was Susan? So she found out and then what happened?

Susan: I thought of applying to go to Palestine. I was in Germany and I wrote on the application form – on the way to visit my only living relatives Dr and Mrs Banyai. Of course here was Germany; here was Scotland and here was Palestine so no way was it on the way but nevertheless my great-uncle and great-aunt also made an application and meanwhile I had met my husband to be.

Int: He was in the Jewish Brigade – Paul ?

Susan: Yes, he was in the Jewish Brigade

Int : You had arranged to go to Palestine via Ayr and in between you met Howard’s father, Paul.

Susan: My cousin, when she discovered that I was alive, and I had written to her, and what I had written was really true, meaning that we had lost our parents and family and so on (said), “What on earth are you doing out there? Why aren’t you here with me?” So I applied to go, but because of, I’ll never know why or how, but because I mentioned Dr and Mrs Banyai in my application and because they mentioned my name (she was able to go to Ayr).

In 1946 Paul and I went back to Kaunitz where we were liberated for Rosh Hashanah [the Jewish New Year] and on the way out we called at Badenhausen, which was where you put your application and we asked what happened to my visa application. “Oh well, didn’t you get your entry permit”. I said, “No”. (They said) “Well when you get back you’ll find it in your letters.

Int : So they checked the papers and they allowed you to come to Scotland

Int:You went back and found the application?

Int: So you arrived and discovered you had a visa to take you to Scotland?

Int: But you came to Scotland and then you decided to study as a teacher?

Susan : Not yet, first I started nursing. I did a year’s nursing.

Int : Because you had to choose between being a domestic or being a nurse. Is that correct?

Susan : Yes, you could either be somebody’s maid, which I didn’t fancy, or be a nurse.

Int : How did you find nursing?

Susan : Well, I didn’t do very much of it and anyway, three months was the preliminary training school, but that winter was the worst, I don’t know in how long. The practice in Stobhill was that they stayed in the ante-natal ward until their waters broke and then the nurse took them to the maternity unit in an ambulance. This time it was so bad, the snow and so on that half the staff didn’t get in to hospital, and it was then, naturally, that two or three people need to go at the same time – their waters break – so there was nothing else for me but to go.

They had to send me and lo and behold the ambulance got stuck and I think if I didn’t wet my pants, I came very near it. The woman kept on saying “Dinna fash, hen, dinna fash, hen”. I had only been here in this country three months. I didn’t know what she was saying. Eventually I asked her, and she said it means, “Don’t worry, dear”. I took her over and I came back and they said “What’s the matter? Your face looks kind of green”.

**Susan Singerman – Integration**

In this section Susan talks of going to Glasgow University and becoming a languages teacher. She was encouraged to go to Garnethill Synagogue.

Int : Did you decide after the year that you weren’t cut out to be a nurse?

Susan: No, I had two small children. They were going to be in my care for a long time so I wanted to have the same holidays.

Int : That was later. You didn’t have the children when you were nursing.

Susan : Pardon.

Int: You didn’t have the children when you were a nurse?

Susan: No.

Int : You got married after that and then had the children.

Susan: Well it was half way through.

Int : And later in Glasgow am I right in saying that you were quite involved in politics, in the Labour movement?

Susan : Yes I’m afraid so.

Int : I think that’s great actually. How was it that you became involved in politics?

Susan: Through Annie Feuerman. Did you know her?

Int : Who was she?

Susan: She was a cousin of Mr Kubie’s. She introduced me to the Carmichaels. Neil Carmichael, when I first got to know him he wasn’t an MP yet, but he became a Labour MP. He stood for Kelvin and I lived in the West End then.

Int : And you and Kay Carmichael became best friends?

Susan: Oh yes, that’s right. Yes, she died just very recently.

Int : Was it difficult for a Jewish, Hungarian refugee to be involved in Glasgow Labour politics?

Susan : Well, you know, it’s difficult to answer that. There were so many things, after I got… I wanted to go to University. Dr Banyai, he wasn’t you know (a relative), it was my aunt who was the relative – he was an in-law- said only about a few weeks after I arrived. “I suppose you must have thought we were still as rich as we were in Vienna, so that we would put you through University”. Well, that finished it for me.

Int : A subtle way of telling you, I think.

Susan: So I went into Glasgow and I spoke to Annie Feuerman and she looked at the wording of my visa and it said that I could take no jobs paid or unpaid except jobs of national importance and they were of two kinds – one was to be a domestic maid; the other…

Int: Nursing. That’s when you when you went to nursing; that was before you were married.

Susan: Yes.

Int : I’m sure you must be tired now, so my last question for you – I haven’t mentioned before or asked you anything about Judaism. Now, being Jewish caused you all that trouble in the past. Would you say it’s still significant in your life after you came to Scotland or did you just try and become an average Scottish Hungarian?

Susan : Well, I don’t know. If I’d married a Hungarian, it could have been different, but you know I didn’t, and it’s very difficult to say, and well, of course, there is the fact that although I have been to Israel, I think about three times, I stayed here. I never went to Israel [after the war.]

Int : You didn’t have much to do with Judaism at first, but then you met Dr Cosgrove, didn’t you?

Susan: Yeah, that’s right.

Int: What did he say?

Susan : I said – again, I must have been very stupid, I don’t know how I got through University – I said, “They can choose when they are older. I am not going to give them anything, any religion”. And, if you get nothing, if you don’t get a choice, then you can’t choose from nothing, so, Annie Feuerman got me to go to – I think it was the Purím do – to Garnethill (Synagogue) and I got a tap on my shoulder, “Are you Mrs Singerman?” “Yes” and then, “9 o’clock, Sunday morning”.

Int : For cheder… Int: Those two children, yeah – that was Dr Cosgrove.

Susan: After that, when Dr Cosgrove commandeered them into Sunday School, Howard then got Bar Mitzvahed at Garnethill (her grandson, Alex, thirty seven years later, also had his Bar Mitzvah at Garnethill). Of course, Garnethill wasn’t the way it is now.

Int: It was very busy at our time, wasn’t it?

Susan: Yes, in the first year I only got a seat at the window.

Int: Now you could have a choice of seats.

Int: Thank you very much, it was very interesting and I know you taught for a number of years as well. Was that schools in the West End or did you teach all over Glasgow?

Int: You taught at The Girls High – French and German then at Knightswood and then you were Head of Department at Allan Glen’s for many years before you retired.

Susan: For 15 years.

Int : Tell Angela what happened at your Graduation.

Susan: I used my maiden name because by then, right or wrong, I didn’t want to be any different from others, I wanted to be treated like everybody else.

Int : You didn’t want people making excuses for not doing essays because you had the children. You didn’t tell anyone you had children, did you?

Susan: Isobel Ferguson,

Int : Your best friend.

Susan : When I was doing Jordanhill teacher training you had to be five weeks in the college and five weeks out, and I was sent to Hyndland and this was Howard’s last year. There was this Jewish teacher at Hyndland so she said, “Oh, the next class is through to the primary,” and so we went along and lo and behold who comes down the stairs but Howard – “Hi Mum”. So she said nothing, like the good Scotsman she is: anybody can make a mistake.

The following week, again we went to the same routine, and who comes along, Shirley, and then “Hi Mum”. So, by this time the look on her face was – anybody can make one mistake, but two!

Int : So you explained to her?

Susan: Yes, I had no choice.

Int: At your graduation, two children appeared.

Susan: Yes, with the rest of my class.

Int: Nobody knew it, and they said, “Who are these”, and you said, “My children”. (Susan deliberately chose not to tell her lecturers and classmates during her course that she had children as she did not want any special concessions).

Susan: As if, you know, they had to be washed up.

**Susan Singerman – Reflection On Life**

This section is written and read by Howard Singerman, Susan’s son. He explains, as Susan was unable to do in her final months, how she contributed so much to the continuing struggle against racism.

Howard Singerman: When my mother, Susan Singerman, was interviewed for the Gathering the Voices Project in August, 2010, she was seriously ill and sadly, she passed away on January 17th, 2011. In view of her poor health, the interview was restricted in time to avoid overtiring her, although it still captures much of her trademark spirit and sense of humour. However, the restricted time, and also her natural modesty, meant many aspects of her remarkable life were not touched on in the interview.

Susan suffered the most extreme racism and persecution. She fought against racism and prejudice throughout her life. In the early 1960s, in Glasgow, she helped form and run the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination, known as CARD. CARD worked to raise awareness of racism and to campaign against racial discrimination for ten years until it was replaced by Glasgow Community Relations Council.

For many years, Susan would not speak of her ordeal during the war. However, after retiring as a teacher, she began to speak to young people at schools about her experiences. She received hundreds of letters from school children saying how moved they had been by hearing her story. She felt it was vital that what had happened should not be forgotten. In 1996 she was made an MBE for services to the understanding of the Holocaust.

Susan survived unspeakable horrors, but what she always said was essential was not to let the Nazis destroy her humanity, and the humanity of those they were oppressing. She said she would not let the Nazis turn her into an animal.

My mother, Susan Singerman, spent her life helping other people, and impressing the need not to forget the Holocaust to ensure such evil never happened again. She loved her two children and five grandchildren very dearly, and saw them as part of her legacy to the future.