

# JUDY JACOBS



Judy Jacobs was born Judith Gondos in 1937 in Budapest, Hungary. Had the Holocaust not intervened, she might have followed in her father's footsteps as a physician.

The Gondos family – Bela Gondos, a radiologist, his wife, Anna Ilona Havas, an artist and interior designer, and Judy – lived an upper-middle class life in a large, well-furnished apartment on the Pest side of the Danube.

Bela grew up in an observant home in northeastern Hungary near the Czech border. When the family moved to a town with no secondary school, he was sent to a nearby community where he attended a Catholic high school, the only high school in the area. Antisemitism there stirred him to become an ardent Zionist. Anna, from the small town of Bekes, knew the contents of every art exhibit in Budapest. The Gondoses also enjoyed theater and opera.

A major component of being Jewish for the Gondos family was communal identity. They tried to keep kosher, but it was difficult during World War II.

Judy was 2 years old when the Nazis invaded Poland. Her early childhood years passed largely in that shadow, with the German invasion of Hungary finally occurring in March 1944. Only a few months earlier, at 6, Judy had started first grade in a Jewish day school. Fond memories of childhood linger: ice skating with her father at lunch, spending summer with her grandparents in Bekes, playing with friends.

The Gondos family was together in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp from July to December 1944, when they were taken to Switzerland. Judy's grandparents and her extended family died in Auschwitz. Her mother's brother died in a forced labor camp.

Judy was 9 in 1946 when the family moved to Arlington, Virginia. Anna sewed lampshades. Bela updated his professional skills as a volunteer at Georgetown University Hospital and later did a fellowship in Boston. The family settled in the Washington, D.C. area in 1949. Judy was confirmed in a Conservative synagogue.

While a student at the University of Michigan, Judy's early goal was admittance to medical school. Marriage to David Jacobs intervened, and she graduated as an education major. Later, at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, she earned an MBA in finance and a Ph.D. in higher educational administration.

Judy and Dave have four children: Diane, Dan, Tom, and Jonathan. When the children asked questions about her experiences, she always responded, but it wasn't until the late 1980s, she says, that the "floodgates opened."



Portrait by David Sosland

Excerpt from *From the Heart: Life Before and After the Holocaust ~ A Mosaic of Memories*

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