

Leslie Banos

Leslie Banos was born Laszlo Banos on August 16, 1923, to Bertha and Morris Banos in Nyirbator, [Hungary](#). His father was Jewish, but his mother was not. Leslie's mother died before he turned one, so he was raised by his maternal aunt, Margaret, and her husband in [Budapest](#). Members of the Vanczak family were active Social Democrats and unionists. As a youth, Leslie worked in the Vanczak steel-manufacturing plant while attending night school.

Leslie recalls that his resistance and rescue activities in Hungary began in 1938 when the [Nazis](#) occupied [Czechoslovakia](#). Leslie's aunt, Margaret, hired Czech refugees, many of whom had been Jewish leaders and professionals, for work in the factory until they could be smuggled to safety.

In 1941, Leslie was placed by the Underground in a huge government-owned factory at Csepel Island, Hungary, where tanks, ammunitions, and dive bombers were manufactured to support the German war effort. Leslie, a welder, supplied the Underground with daily information about the planning and production of the factory.

Because he spoke German, in 1943 the Underground recruited Leslie to join the [SS](#) under a false identity. Assigned to the SS headquarters in Budapest as a liaison between the Hungarian army and SS operations in Budapest, he accessed vital information, forged documents, rescued

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prominent Jews from the [ghetto](#) in Budapest, and smuggled food to those in hiding. During this time his father and half-brother's underground activities were exposed, and they were executed by the Nazis.



Soon after [Germany](#) surrendered, Leslie briefly went to school and then ran three movie houses. In December of 1945, he was warned that Hungarian police had an arrest warrant for him because he had been questioning the Communists about his family's holdings and belongings. Leslie emigrated illegally from Hungary to the American occupation zone in [Vienna, Austria](#), and then found safe harbor as a Hungarian refugee in Bamberg, Germany. He went on to work for the [United Nations](#) in Germany, reuniting children with their families.

In 1951, Leslie immigrated to the United States where he received a scholarship to the University of Pittsburgh. To earn course credit, he interned with the noted television personality Fred Rogers at public television station WQED. After several jobs at local television stations, Leslie became head photographer for both the Pittsburgh Steelers and Pittsburgh Pirates from 1969 to 1976.

Leslie met his future wife, Georgine, while he worked in Germany following the war. They married and had five children: Robert, Michael, Karen, Edward, and Christina. At the time of the interview in 1995, Leslie and Georgine had four grandchildren.