Anna Eva Gaspar

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Anna Gaspar is a small, thin, bespectacled woman, who fascinated me each time we met with her mental alertness and humor. She is a whole-hearted and friendly woman. Her hobby is embroidering and she adores her plants. According to her, the plants grow so well because she talks to them. Her daughter's family lives in the same flat 2 floors below her, but she doesn't like to disturb them. However, her daughter visits her on daily basis, calls her up several times a day to inquire about her. Auntie Aniko cooks invents meals and cooks them for herself. One of her kind replies to my goodbye, take care, is: 'All right, all right, my only concern is to take care of myself!' And she laughs. This is what auntie Aniko is like.

Remarriage and Children

Life Today

Glossary

Family Background

My paternal grandparents were originally from Debrecen, Hungary. My grandfather's name was Menyhert Schwartz, and I think my grandmother's was Elza. I don't know what their occupations were, because I was too small, around 2-3, when my grandfather died. I don't really remember him. He was much older than my grandmother. I remember once I was taken to my grandfather and he had a walking stick. He sat in the armchair, and he pulled me closer with that stick. He put the hook of the walking stick around my neck and pulled me with that. I was afraid, very afraid. This was the only time I met my grandfather. My grandmother gave up the apartment, sold the house, and moved to be with her son in Kisszekeres, also in Hungary, and she died there. I met her several times there, we used to visit her during the summer, and I used to stay there for a month. She was a homemaker, she didn't work in the garden, and she helped out her daughter-in-law, this is all I know.

They had three children, the eldest was my father, he had a sister, Etelka Grunstein and a brother, Samu Schwartz. Etelka died when I was around 10-15. Her husband was a farmer, but I didn't know him. They had a huge estate, but the family died out. They had three children, three daughters who lived in Kassa. At that time we lived in Romania, so we couldn't visit them. When Northern Transylvania was annexed to Hungary [according to the Second Vienna Dictate] 1 I went several times to visit them, and I think I met auntie Etelka, but I'm not sure. The eldest sister, Bebi, emigrated together with her daughter Zsuzsi to Israel. The two younger sisters were deported from Kassa [today Kosice, Slovakia]. The family where my grandmother lived [at his son Schwartz Samu] had no children. Samu and auntie Erzsi, Samu's wife, had no children. Samu was a farmer too, he lived in Kisszekeres. He had his own estate, which they managed. They had animals, poultries, they raised all kinds of animals. They never took me out to the estate, I just lived in their house. I know only that uncle Samu used to go away early in the morning and came home late in the evening.

My father's name was Hugo Schwartz, he was born in 1888 in Debrecen. I know he was an officer in the Austro-Hungarian army. He was very proud he was lieutenant. He had a decoration and he was so proud he was showing off with it all the time. He related us much about the war, because he fought through World War I. When he was demobilized after the war, he became a farmer. He graduated a university as agricultural engineer.

My father wasn't religious at all, he didn't wear a hat, he wasn't even kosher. And he didn't observe the traditions. Jews are allowed to eat only kosher meals, pork meat and pork fat is forbidden. That's why they must use hen or goose fat for cooking. The shochet has to slaughter the chickens, cows and calves. But my father didn't observe these rules. We had everything: bacon, sour cream and meat.

My maternal great-grandfather and grandparents were originally from Zerind [Nagyzerend correctly in Hungarian]. This is a village in Arad county, between Nagyvarad and Arad, 60 km from Nagyvarad. My great-grandfather and my great-great-grandfather are buried there, as well. My

grandparents never related about their parents, great-grandparents or great-great-grandparents. Interestingly, things today are completely different, at least from my point of view. I am terribly fond of my grandchildren. They [my maternal grandparents] kept me at a distance. For example I never got a caressing or a kind word from my grandparents. I don't know why. I had no attachment to my grandmother or to my grandfather. My mother was different. Between us there was a strong attachment.

My maternal grandfather, Emanuel Weiss, Mano in Hungarian, was a deep religious, decent man. His children weren't so religious. My grandmother Regina Weiss was religious too, but she didn't wear a wig. I remember them very well, because I spent every summer in Zerind, if we didn't go for holiday somewhere else. But if we did, we only went to Borszek to take some fresh air, but even then we spent a part of the summer holiday in Zerind. When Northern Transylvania was annexed to Hungary 1 we didn't go to our father, me and my brother went to Zerind. We were there every summer, sometimes for as long as three months. My mother was there as well. They locked the apartment and we all went to Zerind. It was a large house, later it was nationalized, and I never regained it. I couldn't obtain my uncle's death certificate. His wife didn't want to give it to me. She said the wealth belonged to my uncle and she inherited it. Poor of him died 15 years ago. He escaped from the deportation. And so the house was nationalized. I managed to regain some land that formerly belonged to my grandfather.

I can still see the large old house, it was in the center of the village. There was a dining room, a living room, a bedroom for my grandparents, a spare room, a separate room for my uncle – he was single at that time, he got married later, when I was a big girl already – and there was a kitchen and a bathroom too. We had a pump in the yard. Once a week, the coachman, uncle Gyuri, pumped up the water into a reservoir, which was in the loft, and we had water in the bathroom for one week. We had a boiler in the bathroom and stoves in the rooms. There wasn't and there still is no gas in Zerind, we used to heat with wood. One of my uncles built a new, modern apartment near the grandparent's house, and they lived there. There were four or five rooms also. But I saw that building only after the war. They kept cows in the yard and they used to give milk for free to the poor. My grandfather was really charitable, and he helped the poor very much. They milked the cows every morning and every evening and there were some people who came with their pots and got milk for free. There were a few poor people in the village, and they knew already who got milk for free in the morning and who in the evening. It wasn't necessary to be Jewish to get milk for free. There was no anti-Semitism then. They knew my grandfather was the wealthiest in the area, but nobody said a word against him.

They were involved in farming, they did agriculture. They had a large estate. They raised animals, but not many, agriculture was more important. They even grew rice. My grandparents had an enormous estate. The yard was incredibly long, it was very, very large. The temple was there and some offices in the street, and the coachman lived there too. There was a large stable on the left. There were a few horses, as many as needed for the carriage. Two, three or four, but I don't know exactly how many. In the back of the yard was the vegetable garden and the fruit-garden. It was an enormous lot. There were people who managed the vegetable garden and the stable. We called them servants. They were usually Hungarians, because Zerind was a Hungarian village, I don't know if there were any Romanians at all there. It was a totally Hungarian village. I don't know how many servants we had. Some of them worked the land, but there were some servants in the house

as well. Those who worked in the house were considered of a higher rank than those who worked the land. And those who worked in the agriculture had houses in the yard. The house servants were villagers and they always went home. The grandparents were so democrats they built bathrooms and toilets, water-closets, for the servants. It was a huge house with an “L” shape.

For example they tried to grow rice and they succeeded. Nobody grew rice in that area, but they tried and succeeded. The Koros was near by, they drained the water from there with ditches, because the rice needs water. The ditches were made from metal, not from wood. First they tried on a small area and when they saw its success, they made a larger plantation, because it was a rarity to grow rice in Transylvania. It was lucrative, so it returned the investment. For example, my grandfather managed to breed the white buffalo. The buffaloes are usually completely black. And only my grandfather had a white buffalo in that area. They probably had an unpigmented [albino] buffalo, and they made it mate with a cow and so another white buffalo resulted, but I don’t know exactly how. Even now, when we were there, my husband was really impressed when the people came and said: ‘well, we still remember Mr. Weiss, who bred the white buffalo...’ It died out, there are no more white buffaloes left. But my grandfather bred it.

There was an administrator. The wholesalers used to come and buy from us. There was a completely different world then. My grandfather gave up farming and my uncle took over. In fact, they just managed the estate. And each part of the estate had a responsible leader. My grandfather just managed things. He did the paperwork, and he only dealt with the large enterprises and the suppliers. They didn’t bother with small things like retailing. And to be honest, I was a child and I didn’t care. Not to mention that after we were annexed to Hungary, and Zerind remained in Romania [Editor’s note: It was in southern direction from Nagyvarad, so it belonged to Southern Transylvania.] I didn’t go there anymore. The border was there. Until then we went to Zerind by train, so I got used to travel with the train since my childhood. I sat near the window and I stuck my head out, I remember that the wind got in my eye, but I wasn't afraid.

My grandfather was Orthodox, a strict one. He observed the Sabbath, the Pesach and all the other holidays. He used to pray every morning, he wore all the religious clothes on his head and his arms. When they visited us in the town, and we lived in the same place, he never missed the morning prayer. He was deeply religious. I saw him praying in tallit. I got out of the room, but my presence never bothered him. It was mandatory to read the prayers. Once I asked him why, if he has to say the same prayer every morning. You are not allowed to recite it because you could omit a word. That’s why one has to read it. And he read the Talmud almost all the time. He read a few Hungarian novels as well, he was allowed to. He always used to say these novels had only two kinds of outcome, the people [the characters] either died or got married. He was a very educated old man, I was the only one who argued with him quite a lot.

Jewish Traditions

My grandfather built a Jewish temple in the yard of their house. It wasn’t a synagogue, just a prayer house. It wasn’t allowed to build storeyed houses, I don’t know why, but there was a separate hall for men and women. I was a child, I didn’t go to the temple, but I saw people coming on Friday evening, and they were quite many, around 40-50. The ceremony took place according to the Orthodox ritual. A rabbi used to come there on high holidays, but he didn’t live in the village. There was a chazzan, but there was no rabbi. The temple was only open on Fridays, Saturdays and on

holidays, on weekdays people used to pray at home, at least those who did...

But Saturday was a very important event. It was not my grandmother who prepared things, I don't want to show off, but we had a house-maid and a cook, and they did everything. My grandmother only told them what to do, and they did that. The cook was a villager, so she went home every day, but there was a house-maid who helped her, and she did the housework. On Saturday it was forbidden to do anything, we were allowed only to read the prayer book. I read it, but I didn't pray too much. But it was forbidden to tell the house-maid to 'turn on the light' when it was getting dark. It was forbidden to sew as well. In a word we could do nothing, because my grandfather didn't let us. I spent the time with reading, and I used to go out for a walk. I was a child, and I went with my girlfriends. I didn't stay at home on Saturdays, I went home just for lunch and then I went away again.

On Friday evening my grandmother brought out a Menorah, she lit all the seven candles and she prayed. She held her hand above it and she mumbled the prayer. My mother [at home] lit only two candles, separately, but I don't think she prayed. My mother wasn't religious. And then came the dinner, which itself was a whole ceremony. For side dish we had fish aspic, and then meat soup, roast and a meal called 'ritschet', which I didn't like at all. It was a specialty made from bean and gershli, but I did't like it, and my grandmother always scolded me because I didn't eat it. Then we had fruit. But it was a great dinner, it always commenced quite early, because, you know, the candles were lit already at dusk, and lasted quite long. Grandfather graced us, he put the shawl on my head and the cap on my brother's head. He always took up my brother, telling him 'Laci, where is your head?' This meant he had no cap, he wasn't wearing it. And he graced all of us, first my grandmother, then my mother, my brother and I was the last. This happened before dinner, after the candle-lighting. He said the 'broche' for everything. I think I knew some broches then, but now I don't remember any of them. You had to say broche for every dish and for the fruit also. And then you had to mumble something.

They prepared the cholent for Saturday. On Friday the house-maid took the cholent to the baker, to put it in the stove. It was always a big question mark how the cholent would be. For example I liked it more juicy. My grandparents liked it toasted. We competed with each other – but usually I won. And there was kugel in the cholent, they removed the skin from the gooseneck, but they didn't cut it, and they stuffed it until it looked like a sack. After I came home I always tried to find out how they made the stuffing, but nobody could tell me. I liked the kugel very much, boiled in the cholent, and when the bean became toasted, the kugel became toasted as well, and then they cut it up. It was delicious, I loved it. They baked the cholent in a pot, which was covered with paper. The servant had to go after the cholent on Saturday at a fixed hour. On Saturday we had cholent, soup, meat, and all kind of meals. My poor grandfather liked very much to eat, he had two strokes, both of them after Saturday. Finally my mother didn't let him eat fatty things, she cooked garlic soup for him, but when my mother turned away, he always took the dip from the meat soup terrine and he put it in the garlic soup, to make it tastier. We ate in the room, of course, not in the kitchen. Now we eat in the kitchen. But then we didn't go to the kitchen at all. Grandma didn't really go to the kitchen, she just gave out the instructions. My mother did. The eating was a ceremony in itself.

The really big ceremony was at Pesach. Before Pesach there was the chametzing. My mother spread crumbs and my grandfather gathered them with a small dustpan and a brush. He had to go to every room to gather the crumbs. And then they brought down the Pesach dishes from the loft in

a big chest. The Pesach dishes were a different service. They changed the chinas, the glasses, the cutlery, the cookers, absolutely everything. Nothing remained from the everyday ones. They put the everyday ones aside and took out the Pesach dishes. The Pesach dishes were a Rosenthal service, the most famous china. I don't know exactly whether they were made in Germany or Austria, but I think the Rosenthal chinas were made in Austria. We couldn't use wheat or yeasty flour at Pesach, but we could buy potato flour from the store. My mother made yellow cake from that…I didn't eat it and I will never eat that good yellow cake, made from potato flour. She made it like the normal cake. She mixed the egg-yolk with sugar, put in the mousse and the flour. And from this a yellow cake is made. And then one can put coca in it, or nuts, but the base is that yellow cake. And it had to contain flour. But instead of flour she put potato flour in it, but that wasn't that dry, but this yellow cake was quite dry, and has a much better taste, at least I liked it better. There was a label on every food-product that 'sel Pesach'. We had special milk; we couldn't buy milk from the store, we got the milk from the Jewish Community and that was Pesach milk. We did it in the same way at my grandparents, in Zerind and in Varad also, because they lived in Varad since 1940. The chicken are taken to the shochet and he slaughters them, right? It was forbidden to eat it, the shochet had to see it first whether it was kosher or not. There was a shochet in Zerind. He slaughtered the cows and the sheep and all the other animals too.

At Pesach the first evening is the eve of Seder. On the eve of Seder all the family gathered in Zerind, and we sat to the table in the enormous dining room, it was a very long table there, my grandfather sat at the head of the table in a large armchair and he leaned against the armchair, because one had to lean sometimes to the right, then to the left, just as it is written in the Haggadah. [Editor's note: According to the Haggadah, during Seder eve one has to lean aside to eat what's on the table. The Haggada provides an instruction for this in the section starting with 'Mah nisstanah' (What is the difference? i.e. between this night and the others): The fourth question of Mah nishtanah: 'Why is this night different from the others? On the other ones we eat sitting down and leaning, but this night leaning.' The custom of leaning comes from the Roman custom according to which the free, full citizens used toe at leaning on pillows. The Jews gain their freedom at the holiday of Pesach, when they managed to get free from the pharaohs rule. The custom of leaning on pillows symbolizes the status of freedom. There is no chalakhic rule for this. One has to lean to one side, but according to some traditionsone has to lean to the left and to the right, but this has no chalakhic motivation.] My oldest uncle, Bela, together with his wife, sat on my grandfather's right-hand side. They had no children. On my grandfather's left-hand side there sat uncle Vili with his wife, then my mother and my youngest uncle with his wife and we, the children. We were four, my two cousins, my brother and myself. We sat at the other end of the table. All the grandchildren were there. My grandfather sat on the head of the table and he led the Seder. That was a great experience. He told us what to do: we had to eat this and drink that. And of course we, the children, used to giggle, because we didn't care too much… We sat at the other end of the table, and we played silly pranks, but it was very impressive… Not really because of the religiousness, because I'm not religious at all, I couldn't believe in something after what I went through, but the grandparents imposed us the ceremony. The plate I have now in front of me is a special china plate, a large white plate with a few dents. In every dent there were different vegetables, horseradish and parsley and I don't now what, but to be honest I didn't really care. But my grandfather gave it to me to put them between two matzot, and that matzah was a special matzah, not this thing we eat now. They were thick and handmade, not machine-made ones. The other matzot, the ones we bought, were machine-made, but those from the top of the plate,

separated with table napkins, were special ones...

My grandfather had a big, silver goblet, the boys a smaller one, while we had a little one, but also made from silver. That was in front of us, and we had to drink from it when my grandfather told us to. It was a really intimate atmosphere. We put a separate goblet for Eliyah. That one was an even bigger goblet. There are so many things that were wiped from my memory, and I don't really want to think about them, but I remember the table very well. Everyone's face was in front of me. Although I had no photos of my uncles and aunts or anyone else, I can still see them even now. Everyone had a silver goblet. I was very upset because aunts had smaller goblets than the uncles. Feminism was already working inside me. From the head to the other end of the table the goblets became smaller and smaller. But it was only allowed to use those goblets at Pesach, on Seder eve.

We had to say the mah nishtanah, and my grandfather read the Haggadah in Hebrew. We didn't understand it, nobody explained it to us. They told us if we didn't understand something we only had to ask and they explained it. But who cared? We were children. Adults always told the children what they had to do, so we did the same. I remember we had to dip our sins with our little finger in the glass and shake it off to get rid of them. And when one of the children, I don't remember who, put his/her finger in his/her mouth, my grandfather scolded him for that, because he/she could remain with the sin in this way. He explained it something like this. At mah nishtanah they always asked another child's name, and he/she answered. We, the children, had approximately the same age. One of my cousins was born in 1923, the other in 1924 and my brother in 1921. So we had almost the same age, and we always decided who would say the mah nishtanah. My grandfather asked who would say the mah nishtanah. In fact there are some questions in the mah nishtanah regarding how/why we did this or that. It is a crying shame that I don't remember the mah nishtanah, even though I finished the elementary, the middle and the high school in the Jewish school. We had religion classes and separate Hebrew classes, taught by that poor Leichmann, and we learned how to write and read in Hebrew, but I don't remember anything now. One of these days it occurred to me that I don't remember even the Hebrew letters. But then they asked the mah nishtanah in Hebrew, the booklet was in front of us, but it was written with Roman letters. Not with Hebrew letters, to avoid the confusion. In a word we had to read it out if we didn't want to stammer.

There was a ceremony where one of my uncles distracted my grandfather's attention, and we had to hide a piece of matzah somewhere in the room. He didn't have to know where the matzah was, he just told that the person who hid it to bring it back. It wasn't so strict that he had to find it. Usually a child hid it, and he gave it back, in exchange for a present. A kilogram of chocolate, or anything you asked for... I know my brother requested some writing utensils, because he always wanted to learn. There were no computers and this kind of things. I think my cousin asked for clothes, but I don't know exactly... But we had everything we needed. Every year it was a different grandchild who stole the thing we had to hide, and he/she got something for it ..., he/she gave it only in exchange of a present.

We opened the door, and we waited for the Messiah to come in. [Editor's note: According to the liturgy Elijah is expected, who is the messenger of the Messiah's coming.] A really funny thing happened once. There was the new part of the house, my uncle built it. It was near the old house, and we had to go up ten steps to the corridor. And the apartment opened from the corridor There were many rooms there. And they opened all the doors, the door of the dining room, the front door

and the outer door. And who came in? A cow popped in its head through the door. I'll never forget this. Everybody was so shocked about how could this have happened...? They surely took up the coachman for that. The cows were in the stable, and probably this one wasn't tied well, nobody knew, I don't remember, but I know it was a great fuss because of that, and they sanctioned the coachman. And the cow popped in its head. But only its head. I can almost see it even now, it had a mottled chop, but you could imagine the face everyone made. My grandfather told that if he was superstitious, he had to believe that the soul of the Messiah moved in a cow. But he didn't believe in such things... he opened the door for the Messiah. Well, this was funny event. And I related this to my religion teacher, and he enjoyed the story also. This really happened.

At the holidays of fall we made a tent in the yard, in our garden from Varad, because the grandparents were already in Varad in the fall. There was a kind of summerhouse which had a removable roof, they covered it with twigs and so they converted it into a tent. But we never ate there. My grandfather used to pray there, several times a day, but we didn't eat there because it was too small. My grandfather never ate or slept there. Children used to decorate the Sukkah. I decorated it together with my brother, we used colored paper, branches and flowers... But it was a really pleasant place for sitting, but it was forbidden to go there when my grandfather was praying. It wasn't a large place, it was a small summerhouse. Otherwise it had furniture, a table with chairs, but it was small.

My favorite holiday was Purim. Purim is a high holiday. If I remember well, we had to eat eight kinds of fruits. They were winter fruits, there was St. John's bread, and that is a kind of fruit too. We had to get eight kinds of fruits. They observed this. And we, the children, were very happy. They got bananas, oranges, apples, plums and I don't know what else... [Editor's note: Anna Gaspar confuses the customs of two subsequent holidays. One of them is Purim, the mitzvot and customs of which are based on the story of Esther and the Jews living in the Persian empire, and the other one is the Tu bi-Shevat, the new year of Trees. At Purim one of the mitzvoth is the shelakhmones, that is the sending of at least two small packages, presents, which include, beside the pastry called hamantashen people used indeed to put some rare fruit. The Tu bi-Shevat (the 15th day of the month of Shvat), the new year of Trees is the holiday when it is a tradition to put as much fruit on the table as possible. During the period of the Tabernacle the Tu bi-Shevat referred to bringing the first ripe fruit of the trees to the Tabernacle. After the disappearance of the Tabernacle new customs have developed around this holiday: taking the example of Seder of Pesach it is a custom to organize a 'fruit Seder', where people put on the table many types of fruit, especially ones originally from Israel.]

I also loved Chanukkah. It had such an intimate atmosphere. There was a special candlestick, the chanukkiyah, which had 8 candles instead of 7, and they lit every day one more candle. My mother didn't light candles, I think my grandfather lit them. There were eight plus one candles, he lit one of them, and the others using this one. [Editor's note: The first candle was the shammash.] It was forbidden to light every candle with match. They always gave presents to the children at Chanukkah. But not only at high holidays. They were very open-handed. To be honest, they were wealthy enough to be open-handed, but my grandmother was a avaricious woman. I wasn't on good terms with my grandmother, I couldn't accept her temper. She was so avaricious that when they brought in the terrine, and my mother drew out the soup for everybody, she looked into the terrine and said what was left was not enough for the housemaids. And she took the water-jug and

poured water in the soup. I stood up from the table and I wasn't willing to eat together with her anymore. These things irritated me terribly. She was very avaricious indeed. If she was poor, I would have understood her. My poor husband used to say when I didn't buy something for me: 'I can tell you are your grandmother's granddaughter' – and this was the worst scolding I could get from him. So I didn't love her, I know it's not nice to say such things, but she was a bad woman. As good as my grandfather was, so bad was she, with everybody. She was angry all the time because she had to do this and that, to cook separately for that kid, this was me, but she went to the pantry [in secret] and she ate enough. She, alone…

My grandfather was a religious, honest and reliable man. The father of his son's wife always told him that 'You are a…' – it was a special expression for that and it meant he was not a believer, although they met in the synagogue almost every Saturday. He disesteemed my grandfather because he wasn't so deeply religious. He observed the religious rules generally, but he wasn't a bigot… he did only what was necessary. I think he didn't cheat anybody during his life. He didn't wear payes, he had nice white hair. He had a small, white goatee. He wore a hat. He always had a problem with my brother because he didn't wear a cap: 'Laci, you lost your head again! Where is your head?' Especially when we sat down, and my grandfather said the prayer, then we had to put on a cap.

I never heard my grandfather discussing politics. My grandparents were not interested in politics. All what I know is that my grandmother Regina sat down near to the radio, and when Hitler spoke, she scolded him all the time. This was their only political manifestation.

My grandparents always spent the winter in the town, in Varad. They were old and they had to be under permanent medical supervision. They were in Varad when the annexation took place, and that's why they were deported. If they remained in Zerind, they would have avoided the deportation… But unfortunately they were taken away. When this happened, my poor grandfather was around 83-85 and my grandmother 74. [Editor's note: By the time of the deportation the grandfather was 79 and the grandmother was 76 years old.]

Parents

My mother had three brothers, she was the only girl among her siblings. At that time we all had our own governess [Fraulein] for the boys and for the girls. This was in vogue in the elite families, and we belonged to those. My mom's oldest brother was Bela Weiss, he lived in Kolozsvar. They had a distillery on Arpad street 38. I spent many holidays there, mostly the Christmas holidays. They were wealthy, but they had no children. My uncle married auntie Irma, an extremely decent woman, they were full cousins, the mother of auntie Irma was the sister of my grandfather. She became pregnant, but there were complications, premature birth and thrombosis, and the baby died. And the doctors told them they couldn't have more children. When my brother started the seventh grade, my uncle came to us and he asked my mother to give him my brother. He wanted to sign over their wealth to him, and he said a boy needed a father, a man, to raise him. And my poor mother cried so much after my brother… but enough about this. And my brother finished the high school in Kolozsvar, and he was taken away to forced labor from there. I never saw him again. They didn't adopt him, just raised him.

The other brother, uncle Wili, lived in Szilagy county, not far from Nagykaroly, in a village called Tasnad. He built a family house there and he was a farmer. He married the wealthiest girl from

Varad, a girl called Leitner. She was the wealthiest girl and my uncle married her. So there was plenty to bite on. Money wasn't a problem for them. They had two daughters, Agi and Evi. They were deported and their parents didn't come home. None of them. The girls didn't come home, neither. When the girls were liberated, the Swedish soldiers asked them, who wanted to go to Sweden. The girls didn't want to come home, and they spent one or one and a half year in Sweden. They met their future husbands there, one of them went to America, the other to England. One of them died in America.

My mother had a third brother, uncle Herman Weiss, who remained in Zerind. His wife wore a wig, her father forced her to do so before the war, but then she took it off. I was a big girl when he got married, it happened around 1933. He wasn't deported neither, because he lived in Romania, and they emigrated to Israel in 1948. The Jews were taken from the villages to Arad. And they lived there during the war, but then they moved back to Zerind. He wrote me in a letter what he found in the two houses, and how many wheat and corn there was in the granary… so he wrote down all the wealth and he said it would all be mine...

My mother's name was Olga Weiss, she was born around 1890. She was the only girl of her parents. She attended the Catholic school and high school from Nagyvarad, but I don't know why. There are things I remember and I realize I reconciled with everything. I agreed with everything they did. Why mom was raised by nuns? Her parents were in Zerind, she was in Varad, and she attended the convent there. I don't know why. I am sure this she was so warm-hearted because nuns raised her. She graduated the high school, although the girls weren't really used to graduate then. She knew only one Romanian sentence: 'Merge la padure' [Goes to the forest]. She didn't speak Hebrew neither, but she knew German. In our family everybody knew German [we learnt from the governess].

I found out how my parents met only after the deportation. My husband and me were from Varad and we had a good acquaintance, Dr. Deutsch, Elemer Deutsch, and he invited us for a Seder eve. He wasn't religious, but he observed the traditions. His cousin, Dengelegi, was there, too. The wife of his cousin, Edit Palfi, a lady doctor, was invited also. They lived in Vasarhely. Another guest was the cousin of Deutsch's wife. They invited both us and them. I knew better his wife, Marta, she was my French teacher in the Jewish high school, and they asked me about my father, because they knew only my mother. And I began to relate. And then the doctor said – he was a big, fat man: 'I remember now, I was the sadhen…! I arranged for your mother to meet your father, but then I heard that the marriage went wrong.' I don't know where he knew my father from, but it doesn't matter. But he blamed himself for that. Around then the parents made kind of a fair, and traded what they would bring in. What could one feel for a stranger? Nothing. There wasn't any courting. My mother became a fiancee, and then they made arrangements for the wedding. It was a great wedding, I think. They married around 1917-18.

My parent's marriage wasn't a subject of conversation, it took place probably in Zerind, but I don't know exactly. They had both a civil and a religious marriage, and it was particularly difficult for them to divorce. Jews usually didn't separate the couples like the Catholics. [Editor's note: The comparison is incorrect because the Catholic Church forbids the divorce. Anna Gaspar referred to the fact that the Halacha strictly regulates the divorce procedure. The Halacha doen't recognize the civil divorce, the divorce procedure must be conducted under the supervision of the bet din (the Rabbinical Court).] It took quite a long time, but my grandparents insisted on the divorce. After

they divorced, my mother assumed again her maiden name, and was registered as Olga Weiss. After they divorced, my mother remained single and so did my father. My mom's photo was all the time on my father's desk. He claimed my grandmother was the one who separated them. To be honest, my grandmother was a damn bad woman. It's not nice to say this, but she was a very bad woman. And I believe she separated my parents. But I never found out why.

They divided the grandfather's estate during their life. Each child got his/her share and lived on that. My uncle built a house in Tasnad and bought land from his share. They managed my mother's estates as well, and she got some share after her those lands. We lived very well on that.

Growing Up

I had only one sibling, my brother, Janos Laszlo Schwartz. He was born in Nagyvarad, in 1921. I was born in Alsoszopor, in 1923, where my parents lived at that time, but I grew up in Varad We were on very good terms with my brother, although I wasn't such a good to him as he was to me. My mother had another baby, who died when my mother was nine months pregnant. She fell over a sack of potatoes… she stumbled upon the sack and she fell on the baby… I told her it was a pity not to have another sibling, but she told me if it lived I would have never been born.

After my parents got married, they lived in Alsoszopor, because my mother got an estate there as a marriage portion and my father was a farmer there. And the house is still there, even today. Then they divorced and I don't know how they divided the estate after the divorce, I was 3 years old, so I couldn't know and I didn't care much. But I was in Alsoszopor, and twenty years ago, when I was there, the house was still there. And I entered the house and I could tell where the dining room, the spare room and the bedroom was. I could tell because I remembered exactly. We had a separate children's room. I remember even the cribs, in one corner there was my brother's crib, and in the other one there was mine. These are things people remember. But there are things I completely forgot. My brother was 5 when my parents divorced. I don't know why my mother went to Nagyvarad to give birth, probably she thought she would be in better hands, especially after she lost a baby. She was probably afraid.

After my parents divorced, we moved to Varad. First we lived on Kalvaria Street, but that house was rented, and then they bought this duplex house. This was a bigger house, with a large garden. It had two gates and two apartments, and the middle wall was common with the neighbor. I remember the times we lived in Varad. I regained that house after the deportation and I sold it.

I lived together [in the other part of the house] with my mom, my brother and my two cousins, Agi and Evi, my uncle's daughters, who were villagers, but they attended school in Varad. We were like four siblings: my brother and the three girls. It wasn't enough for them to meet only at Christmas and Pesach, so my cousins' parents rented a car. The driver used to carry my uncle's family with his own car. And when we visited them, at the summer holiday, we went by car. I was 15 when I first got in a car.

I corresponded all the time with my father, he used to visit us twice a year. My father lived in Hungary, in Tornyosnemeti, near the Bohemian–Hungarian border. He was a communicative person – everybody liked him in the village. The half of his estate was in Bohemia and the other half in Hungary, so he had a permanent pass, I used to go with him quite often to Kassa. He had his share inherited from the family, he managed a part of his sister's and brother-in-law's estate also, and he

had his own estates too. Probably he bought more land with his capital. My daughter badgered me all the time: ‘Mom, why didn’t you go there and asked him to give you your land back?' Before 1940 I visited my father every year, and he used to come twice a year to visit us in Varad. In 1940 we were annexed to Hungary, and traveling wasn’t a problem anymore. And then we used to visit him almost every summer. When we grew older, my mother allowed us to spend the summer holiday with our father. So we were on good terms, we had no problems. He used to help us, so he asked all the time what we needed, but I had to answer: ‘Thank you, we have all we need.' A child always needs something, but I had to answer that. But he always brought something. He lived in Hungary, he could get more things than us. Not to mention the Bohemian shoes he brought. He brought skating boots, heavy boots and many other things. Once he asked me in a letter what I needed. I wrote him I needed a raincoat. ‘All right, please send me your measures.’ And we went to a tailor and he took my measures, he added some centimeters to them, not to outgrow the coat until the next year. My father received my letter, he went to the store, and he told he needed a raincoat for his daughter. ‘Well, you know, we have to add some centimeters not to be too tight.’ And when I put the raincoat on and I looked into the mirror, I almost burst out crying. all of them added some centimeters to the measures, and I was a thin, puny girl. It looked on me like the trousers on a cow. My poor mom said: ‘Never mind!’ I remember where the tailor in Varad was, in the small marketplace, and he altered it for me. And it became so nice everybody from my class envied me.

At first period I felt awfully at my father’s place, probably because I was accustomed to the kosher household. My father didn’t observe the Jewish traditions. He had no kosher household. He had a woman cook, a house-maid and everything he wanted. But I couldn’t eat the meals made with sour cream. For example I remember I liked squash, but they made it with sour cream, so I couldn’t eat that. My father called my mother on the phone and asked her how should they cook for me. There was ham, boiled ham. I got so sick from it I vomited it out, so I wasn’t accustomed to the treyf household Then I got used to it, but I still don't like having sour cream in the meal. We used to spend 2-3 weeks there. At most four weeks, not more. My father had a lady friend, we got acquainted with her, she was a very attractive woman. But my father never got married again. He lived alone in a mansion-like house. We were on good terms with him, we had no problems.

My father’s estate was more than a thousand acres large. I don’t know if they grew plants there. There were all kinds of things; they had to feed the animals and to maintain the farm. So they had wheat and corn for sure, but I didn’t care about it. I admired the animals, there were seed-horses and stocker cows, who gave I don't know how many liters of milk daily. He liked farming very much. He had an manager, kind of an administrator, who managed the thousand acres estate, and each year they used to bring animals to Budapest to the international fair. They grew all kinds of animals, from pigs to Icelander hens. Those had rings on their legs. The cock was really handsome. Once they took up a three hundred kilogram fat pig to the fair… So they had all kinds of animals, and many acres of land too. It was a model farm. My father enjoyed his job very much. He used to go everywhere with a britzka. The young groom sat in the back and my father drove the horse. I was very happy when we three, together with my brother, went with the britzka and the white horse… That horse had a problem, I remember such silly things, it used to bite off the villager women’s knot. He had sharp teeth, the women wore shawl, but the horse bit off the knot together with the shawl, and the knot remained in its mouth. We had to be careful because if the horse noticed a woman, it went after her to bite her knot off. This was its mania. My father told me not to

beat the horse for this, because the animal wouldn't understand it.

I have to tell you that in 1940 when we have been annexed to Hungary 1, we got automatically the Hungarian citizenship. My father didn’t give up the Romanian citizenship because of us. We became Hungarian citizens automatically, but he didn’t. A German soldier was moved to our house, he was a decent young man and he asked us about my father. I don’t know how this came into question that we are Romanian citizens after our father. He advised us not to tell this to anybody, because we could get into trouble otherwise. We never told it to anybody, nobody knew nothing except his administrator, who reported him at the police for that. The administrator wrote in his report that my father is a Romanian spy. My father ended up in Kistarcsa this way. My brother went to visit him in Kistarcsa in 1940-42 or 1943, and I told him I would go with him. He answered Kistarcsa is not a place for girls. I don’t know anything about my father from then on. I know, because he related to my brother, that he had hernia and I don't know whether before or after the operation clinical death occurred. They took him to the hospital, and put him into cold water and hot water and resuscitated him. After that, they took back him to Kistarcsa. That’s all I know. I don’t know if he was deported. I don’t know. I don’t know anything. These are the things I can relate about my father.

In my opinion my mother was the best woman in the world. She was the best mother and the best wife. She was very nice. If any problem occurred in the family, they called her 'Oli, come please!' If somebody was sick, she went to nurse him/her. The governess took care about the children. She was a helpful, very decent woman. We had no financial problems. We had problems with the health. After my mother divorced, the acquaintances brought the suitors, but she didn’t want to marry again. This came in useful for me as a child, because the suitors used to bring presents for the children. When I was elder, I asked her, why she didn’t marry again. Then she said: ‘Listen my daughter, if a father scolds – we didn’t talk about beating – his child, that is normal. But I couldn’t tolerate a stepfather to rebuke my children.’ So she devoted herself for us. She was a blessed woman. Everybody says his/her mother is the best, but I say that she was better than the best. So I loved her with all of my heart. I lost her so many years ago, and I mourn for her even now…She was everything for me. My father was a stranger in comparison with her.

She wasn’t religious, she didn’t wear wig, but she observed the traditions because of the grandparents. That was the only reason; otherwise the grandparents wouldn’t eat together with us. So she strictly observed the traditions. When my brother was forced laborer, and she bought bacon for him, to put it into the package, she put it first in the stove and she told 'There is draft and the bacon needs it.’ [Editor’s note: It is very likely that she also intended to hide the bacon from the eyes of her parents, not only to keep it in a cool place.] I remember, that poor of she told that she would like to taste the bacon. I told her ‘Taste it without fear, nothing bad will happen!’ She told ‘No. No, no. My grandparents instilled her not to eat bacon.

She went to the synagogue only at Yom Kippur. The highest Jewish holiday is the Day of Atonement, the Yom Kippur. Is forbidden to eat or drink anything on that day. It was forbidden to put anything in your mouth. And usually you had to spend the whole day in the temple. My mother always observed this. She went to the nearest prayer house where the women used to pray…and they chatted all day long. And we, the children, ate the prepared foods at home, instead of fasting. We were ‘very good’ children also. So these things happened.

My mother liked to concoct and she baked very well, although she wasn't enforced to do this. She learnt the secrets of the confectionery. She applied to a confectionery course by replying to an advertisement, she went to a confectioner and she learnt to prepare cakes and candies. She baked splendidly. But of course, her receipt-books disappeared together with her other things. And she liked to bake very much. She prepared always what I liked, for example candies with sour cherry with and fondant. The fondant is the white filling, what they used to put in the chocolate candies. The fondant is a French word. The fondant is a white mass what they used to mix with sugar and I don't know with what, and then they used to put chocolate, coffee and fruits into, those gave the fondant's taste. Then they dipped it into chocolate glaze, they put it on a special paper and dried it. She prepared such kind of candies, what we could buy from the store also. And when I was in the camp, I always wished to be closed in the pantry...in our pantry, from home. It was beautiful and almost so large that this room. And there were the fondants, the jams, the stewed fruits, the candies in a big canister, the honey-cakes and a lot of other things...And they were prepared for me, I could eat what I wanted. There were so many things in the pantry…beginning with the flour-bin, we had a lot of things there. There was everything what we could conserve then. My mother made 'dulcseaca' [Editor's note: This is a Romanian word, the original spelling is 'dulceata', and it is a Turkish sweet made from fruits.], which was a rarity in Transylvania, usually the people from Regat made it. [Editor's note: „Regat", 'Kingdom' was used by Transylvanians in everyday speech when referring to the Romanian Kingdom, before the unification of 1918. It remained in use after the unification, designating the regions of Moldavia and Wallachia that had formerly composed the Romanian Kingdom.] She learnt this from our household teacher, Mrs. Cimpeanu. We needed a woman cook, because that was the fashion in the distinguished families. My mother went to the kitchen only when she wanted. I liked better my mother's meals that the woman cook's ones. She cooked delicious foods. She taught me to stir the different creams and mousses. I loved to taste very much. I liked to lick out the cooking pots, and my mother told me, that would rain on my wedding. This is a popular belief, that if you are dainty, it would rain on your wedding. Despite of this fact I licked out the cooking pots, that's why I was fat all my life... [Editor's note: Anna Gaspar joked about her built, since she was thin all her life.], I ate plenty of candies, those kept me alive.

Once happened a funny event: It was summer and my mother prepared some kind of fruit cream and we had to stir it. My brother took the pot – he liked to lick out the cooking pots also - and he went out to the yard, to the garden, to stir it. My mother shouted, I never forget this: 'Laci, are you ready? You finished the stirring?' 'It will be ready in a minute! It will be ready in a minute!' And when he came back, the plate was empty, he licked out all the cream, I don't know how many yolks with sugar and strawberry. My brother, Laci, did this with us. He was a funny guy.

I tell you straight, I had a German governess [Fraulein] from Dusseldorf, so I spoke rather in German with her, because she demanded that. Her name was Lia Britz, she was around 20, and she was a true German lady. She was young and cross-eyed. We had many photos with her, but she blurred her face on every photo. On the old photos naturally you stood straight, I was on her right side, and my brother on her left. And we were photographed this way, it looked like a postcard. She blurred her face on the photo, to hide her eyes. She couldn't see herself, but she knew that she is cross-eyed. She could see it on the photos. It was forbidden to my mother to educate us, the governess did that. 'Don't intervene. If you didn't need me, I go home.' That was her prompt. She was very severe, and we hated her for that. She was an intelligent, clever woman, but she came to us to earn money. These German women used to work as governesses, this was a

source of income for them. They came to Romania, educated children, but they requested a lot of money for that. There were folders, we found her this way. The grandparents told that the Germans are good educators. They were appreciated for their work. But as a small child I considered exaggeration what they [the governesses] did. She raised me austerely, after the German example. She taught us good manners, how to sit at the table, how to behave and how to dress. I learnt that I had to eat this way not that way…And I do a lot of things how I learnt from her. She pursued hers point, but she didn't intervene when my grandparents asked me not to turn on the light [at Sabbath]. She used to turn on the light then. She accepted it too, but I she didn't put any pressure on me, she just focused on my education. She wanted me to be well-educated. All of my life they tried to educate me not in the Jewish, but in the European spirit. Not to mention that she didn't speak Hungarian at all, only German. We spoke German with each other. We scolded her so badly, that I had no words for that. She asked us 'What you say? What you say?' 'Nothing, we just chat.' When we were together with my brother and my cousins, we spoke about her of course. We detested her because she had no sentiments. I don't remember if she ever praised me. The governess was so severe, that once - I don't know why - when my mother screened me, she rebuked my mother: 'You educate the child or I?' This hurt my feelings very much… I was a puny, weak child. I'm a small eater, and I was small eater in my childhood also, but the governess said that I had to eat what is in my plate. She didn't understand that I couldn't eat it, she said that I had to! I ate it, and I vomited it. Then she went to the kitchen, and she brought another portion, what I had to eat. If I vomited it again, she brought a portion again. Everything must happen how she wanted. I remember that I felt very miserable then.

In my opinion she was a very ugly, bad woman. We detested her, we complained about her and then my mother dismissed her. She didn't oppose, she went home. The next governess was an older woman. But she wasn't much better. Elza? Auntie Matild? I don't remember her name anymore. She wasn't so severe like her predecessor. They raised us for seven years. When we went to school, we were happy because we got rid of them.

These governesses lived together with us, they were almost family members. But for example we didn't eat together with our parents and grandparents. Not with my mother or with my grandparents. The children ate separately. At a separate table, in a separate time. We went together with the Fraulein everywhere. We were together all the time, all the day. I think the Fraulein introduced the separate eating. That is not a Jewish tradition. For example my mother ate together with her parents. After the Fraulein went away, we could eat together with the grandparents. And how happy we were!

We used to eat in the dining room, not in the kitchen. The servant girl brought in the meal, and then she cleared the table and brought the second dish. They brought the bread from the nearest bakery. I liked very much the fresh rye bread with butter. I never ate so good bread since then. The meat soup was my favorite meal. I didn't really eat meat because I didn't like it, I preferred rather the different pastas. My mother was all over me, she cooked always what I requested. My brother ate everything, but I was very picky. My mother gave the instructions to the woman cook what to prepare for us, we had no said in the matter. My mother asked us: 'Tell me, what you want to eat?' – and she requested the woman cook to prepare that. But we had nothing to do with the woman cook. So we lived well. But honestly speaking, my mother didn't let me to the kitchen – I desiderated this very much, and I blamed her because she didn't take me to the kitchen, and didn't

teach me to cook, although she cooked very well. ‘You'll have to spend enough time in the kitchen anyway! Don’t spend your youth with cooking!’ And when I came back [from the deportation] I couldn't make even scrambled eggs. I was always a puny, thin girl, so I was never fat. My mother always wanted me to eat more and better. Everybody told that the candies and the cakes make me fat. The canisters were always full with homemade cookies. They put a plate of cookies near my bed every evening, and I used to nibble them. My favorite cake was the ishler. And I learnt how to bake it.

We had a four room apartment, and a porch along. You went up the stairs, and there was a hallway at right hand side. How you entered the hallway, there were two doors. One led to the drawing room, the other one to the grandparents’ bedroom. Next to that was the children’s room and the dining room, so they were intercommunicating rooms. The dining room had two doors also, one of them led to the bathroom and the other one to a corridor. From the corridor you could reach the pantry, the kitchen, the loft and the servant’s hall. So it was a long flat. It was the same on the other side also. And if you went down a few steps, you could see that all the windows opened to the porch, only the foremost room’s and the hallway’s windows opened to the street. If you went down more steps, you reached the yard, the garden, the kitchen garden and the vineyard. The porch had pillars and roof, but had no walls. I remember that the porch, the window shades and the doors were green...My mother was about to repaint them white, but this never took place. We had parquet floor in the house.

We had only bathtub and boiler in the bathroom. There wasn't hot-cold running water. So if you liked to take a bath, you had to make a fire in the boiler. We heated with wood, the boiler warmed up the water, and if you put more wood on the fire, the boiler warmed the water constantly. My grandfather took bath once a week, on Friday. He took the bath before the Friday ceremony. We didn’t use to go to the mikveh. There was a mikveh in Varad, and I had a few religious girls in my class, who told that you had to go to the mikveh before your wedding. I don’t know if I should be able to go there. I detested even our bathtub, if it wasn’t scoured out how I liked...so I shouldn’t be able to go to the mikveh, even if they forced me. I took bath rather at home. So my grandfather wasn’t bigot.

In 1940 the Hungarians 2 introduced a law according to which the families who had a male member could only employ male servants, grooms. The maid servant and [later] the man servant had a separate room. The woman cook, Helenke, didn't live with us, she came only to cook. Initially we had house maid and woman cook, until the Hungarians introduced this law. Then we dismissed the house maid and we employed a boy to help out in the household. The servants and the groom were considered family members in our house.

We were wealthy, rich people. We had paintings at home also. I grew up in that ambience, it wasn’t a big deal for me. Nobody was art collector in the family. My brother liked the art, but I didn’t really, although I had a few reproductions. I don’t know, it wasn’t a problem for us. The paintings were still-lives, I think my mother liked rather the still-lives. But none of them was painted by such famous painter like Rafaelo... They bought the paintings from Nagybanya. The people from Varad considered that the most beautiful paintings were painted in Nagybanya. But they don’t speak about them already.

The books and the encyclopedias belonged to my mother. She didn't go to the public library, she bought the books what she liked. They were Hungarian books, because my mother didn't know Romanian at all. My grandparents knew less than she. They didn't need it. My mother attended Hungarian school, where she could use the Romanian language? She liked the romantic novels, and she used to read out many times for me. When I was sick, she entertained me with read out, because she did it so well. She didn't read out only, I could say that she acted the novels. She related that she acted many times in the convent also. We had Jokai, Mikszath and other Hungarian classics. She used to recite poetry very well also, but then I went to Romanian school from the first grade, and my mother couldn't help me anymore. I had to read literature, what was obligatory in the school. My father liked to read also. Every evening, when he went to bed, he took the book and read. But if you ask me what, I can't answer. We read systematically. Once happened [right after World War II] that we had to fill out a form about the things what we had in the house: what disappeared, what was taken away. Even my poor husband – he came to us many times, we were friends - knew better what we had, what books were in our library.

We had no Jewish neighbors in Varad, so we didn't live in a Jewish district. My parents rather kept in touch with the relatives. My mother had one-two lady friends who used to visit her, but they rather kept in touch with the relatives. They were distant cousins, but they were on visiting terms with us. Otherwise my mother was an unobtrusive person, she lived for her family. Rarely, when we went to the theater, she used to come with us, but she wasn't a carnal woman. We didn't care if our friends were Jews or not. We were on good terms with every neighbor. For example, two older Serbian women, two spinsters lived next door to us. Auntie Matasits always came to us to phone, because they had no telephone. We needed it [the telephone] because the relatives lived far, the grandparents were in Zerind, and they always inquired about us, because we were a very loyal family, and we had to know about each other. At that time if we wanted to call up somebody we asked the number from the central and we talked. For example there were no pulses, you could talk as much as you wanted. I think that we had to pay a minimal sum just if we phone to another town. But it wasn't a problem to call somebody up. The telephone wasn't a luxury article then. I remember that I never saw them [the two old Serbian women] in the street. What they ate and how they ate? They had guinea-hens. These guinea-hens had a very nasty voice. They cackled all day long. But my mother never rebuked the neighbors for that. There was a Serbian baker, and my parents ordered the bread from him. The baker's man servant used to bring it to us.

The Jews originally from Varad lived in a kind of ghetto. There was a huge temple, a Jewish hospital, so that area was entirely populated by Jewish people. We weren't originally from Varad, because we moved there just in 1925-26. But the Jews originally from Varad lived around the temple and in the adjoining streets. There was the mikveh, the shochet, the chief sochet. Maybe there was assistant shochet also, but I don't remember. Those [who lived in that area] didn't use to visit us, because…I don't know why. I think that I didn't know even one rabbi in my life. There were many Jewish people in Varad at that time. There was Orthodox and Neolog community also. There was an Orthodox and a Neolog elementary school too. The Neolog one was closer to our place, but it was forbidden to go there. They sent me to the Orthodox school, because they said: 'You are Orthodox'. When we moved in Varad, my parents bought a house at the edge of the town, so we lived very far from the Jewish district. But my grandfather expected my parents to enter me in the Orthodox school, moreover he came and entered me. If I stepped out, I needed half an hour to reach the school. And this was a long time in a town like Varad. They entered my brother to the Orthodox

boy’s school. I grumbled enough about this. Because in wintertime…there was streetcar only on the main street, so it was hard to come and go. Sometimes we had classes in the afternoon, and then we had to go one more time…But my grandfather demanded this, and we had to do it so. There was a kindergarten near us, but my mother didn’t let me to go there. Probably it was a poorly rated kindergarten. Oh, how many times I told that I liked to go?! But my mother didn’t let me. I had governess until age 7, until I went to school. The governess went away before I became a schoolgirl.

Near the school were a huge Orthodox temple and an huge Neolog one. Once, I don’t remember on which holiday, may be at Purim, because the Purim is the only Jewish festival, the girls from my class invited me to the Neolog temple. I went with them, I didn’t know that it would be a problem. There was always a big conflict between the Orthodox and Neolog Jews. The Neolog temple had choir and organ. Those were forbidden in the Orthodox temple. The service was really nice. I went to the temple to hear organ music only once. Then I went home and I told that to my grandfather. I thought that he would beat me, although he didn’t even raise his hand… My grandfather explained me, that if I went to the Neolog temple, it would make him feel bad. He told that the Neologs are blasphemers: ‘Don’t you ever set a foot there!’ The Neologs were his enemies, rather than the Christians. I never asked him why. I didn’t want to make him feel bad, because I really loved my grandfather. After he asked me, I never went to the Neolog temple. In Varad we had these two temples and many prayer houses. I don’t know how many, and to be honest it didn’t care for it. For example we lived far from the Orthodox temple, but it was a prayer house near-by, and we used to go there. My grandfather used to go to the same prayer house, at least when he did. But he didn’t go every Saturday, only on high holidays. At New Year’s Day and Yom Kippur he spent the day in the prayer house. On Yom Kippur all the family fasted. I don’t want to lie – I didn’t keep fast. All the friends came to our place and we pinched the cookies what we found in the pantry. I don't know why I did this, may be I was similar to my father? I can say that I was religious, but I wasn’t. What am I to do? And after the deportation I became even less religious than I was before.

School

I attended the Jewish school, my grandfather demanded this. He took me first to the school. He came to Varad and took me to school. I finished there the four grades of the elementary and middle school, there wasn’t Jewish high school for girls. I finished the Jewish middle school and I had to sit the entrance examination in the public high school. The entrance examination took place in a public high school called Oltea Doamna, and if you passed it, you could go wherever you liked. The successful entrance examination authorized you to choose the high school which you wanted. There was the Ursuline school, which was a Catholic school, Catholic nuns led it. The most distinguished and expensive school was the Notre Dame de Sion, a French school. Both schools admitted those girls who passed the entrance examination in the Oltea Doamna public high school. So this was a law. They named the Oltea Doamna high school after Stefan cel Mare's mother. [Editor’s note: Stefan cel Mare (1433, 57–1504) is a Romanian historic character, the Ruler of Moldavia, who famous for his battles with the Turks.] My mother insisted that if I had to choose anyway, and there was no Jewish high school for girls, I should go to the Ursuline school, because she also studied in a convent. It was a very clean, tidy place. The entrance exams were only in Romanian, we weren’t allowed to speak Hungarian!

The boys had a separate school, the cheder, where they learnt the Talmud. [Editor's note: The cheder is an elementary Jewish school, where the children learn how to write and read in Hebrew, it is unlikely that they taught the Talmud there.] The Jewish high school for boys was in the yard of the temple. Our school was after the corner, so near-by the Orthodox temple. But I never got inside the temple. I liked very much weddings. When we came out from school, we used to run and watch the ceremony under the chuppah. I wasn't a temple-goer. The boys had a 12 grades high school [the Jewish high school]. I found recently my husband's graduation group photograph [he graduated there]. My brother finished a few grades there also. But there were 12 grades only for the boys, the girls had only middle school, but we went to the public high school until 1940. The public high school wasn't coeducational, the boys went there in the morning and we, the girls, in the afternoon. The other schools weren't coeducational also In my time there was a separate high school for girls and for boys.

I have to mention that unfortunately there were only two large social classes in Varad [among the Jews]: the rich ones and the poor ones. There was almost no middle class. There were very rich and very poor people. I know this because in the Jewish school the poor children were exempted from school fees, and the wealthy children paid the fees conditionally on how wealthy they were. And there were very wealthy children. I was the fifth or sixth downwards among the rich girls [on an imaginary scale].

We wrote in copybooks, and like today, we had written tests, examinations and moreover they introduced the middle school graduation. For example I graduated from the middle school, and I had to sit an entrance examination to the fifth grade when I finished the elementary school. Unfortunately I had to learn alone, although my mother was at home all the time, but she didn't speak Romanian. And I learnt in Romanian already I did my homework alone. My brother helped me sometime, but I had no coach. I tell you straight, I was a quite good pupil. I got a diploma every year until I finished the middle school. I was a good pupil, a conscientious one, I learnt the lessons even it wasn't necessary. I couldn't go to the school without reading and learning the lesson. But it was pretty hard to us to speak in Romanian. For example, the boards from the street were in Romanian. Even in the corridor of the Jewish school was an inscription: 'Vorbiti numai romaneste!' ['Speak only in Romanian!'] But of course we didn't speak in Romanian... The teachers were obliged to speak in Romanian. Our history teacher was auntie Ida, she spoke bad Romanian and she always planted a guard at the door. The guard's mission was to notice if somebody came on the corridor. 'Tell me, son, if somebody came!' and then she related the history. We listened her open-mouthed. But if it was necessary to spoke in Romanian, she took the book and she read out the lesson from the book. But when she was in a good mood, we used to ask her: 'Auntie Ida, would you relate?' And then she related. She loved Napoleon. She related about almost everything, she was an older woman and it seemed that the principal didn't want to dismiss her, although she spoke bad Romanian. She was a really brilliant woman. Poor auntie Ida. But we had to learn the lesson in Romanian. We learnt nothing in Hungarian. Then we learnt French, Latin and German. We began to learn French from the third grade, German from the fifth grade and Latin from the first grade. They pointed up very much the Latin language then, it was a very important subject. In the Jewish school we learnt Hebrew at religion classes, but I don't remember anything. I didn't learn the Hebrew language. I remember, our religion teacher was called Leichmann and he was angry all the time because we didn't want to learn. We learned how to pray, the Hebrew letters and Jewish history. We had class with poor Leichmann almost every day.

The cheder was in the Jewish district also. I was never there. Only boys could go there, the bocherim. And from there they sent somebody to our place every week, to have the lunch with us. And they were very affected, because they could eat together with us, not in the kitchen, where they were usually admitted. At our place they sat at the table. In the dining room. But they were so puny and so pale. And they were badly dressed also. It was so repulsive. They usually came for lunch, not for dinner. My grandfather called them up, and arranged the day when these children came to us. I think that the school administrator did the arrangements. We didn't receive them at the eve of Seder, because we always spent that in Zerind, not in Varad.

I didn't feel anti-Semitism in the Jewish school, although we had Romanian teachers also. We didn't feel anti-Semitism there. On the other hand, terribly hurt my feelings what happened when I got in the Ursuline. The Ursuline was a Hungarian Catholic order. There were many girls from Bucharest, and I didn't understand how the girls from Bucharest ended up in Nagyvarad. But I never found out. I was 15 and I went together with my girlfriend. We sat down in the classroom where we could. We were four in a desk, a blond girl sat near me. On the first day Klotilda Mater came in – she was the headmistress – and she asked us where we came from, from which school, what marks we had in the school, with what mark we passed the entrance examination and other such kind of things. So she questioned us. When she asked me, I answered that I finished 'Gimnaziul Evreiesc' (Jewish middle school [in Romanian]) – this happened in the Romanian era [before 1940] – and the girl who sat near me, (her name was Ionescu) got up. She got up from beside me and she moved from there. This reaction was like a slap in the face for me. This was the first slap in the face what I got. Later we got acquainted with the classmates, among others with her also, and she apologized for her reaction. She thought that the Jews are like the blacks or aboriginals, who knew what was in her mind. We were 35 girls in the class, and 12 girls were Jewish. They never let us felt that we were Jewish. For example on 1st of March everyone found a "martisor" on her desk. [Editor's note: This is a Romanian folk custom, on 1st of March the boys used to give a 'martisor' to the girls, and the men used to give that to their older and younger lady friends. This is usually a small, metallic object, which had a white-red strip, and the girls wore it on their collar.] I didn't know about this custom. And every girl got this present. We were on very good terms. I finished the first two grades of the high school in the Ursuline, this means the ninth and tenth grades now We had to pay school fees there, because it was a private high school and it belonged to the Catholic Church. It wasn't a public high school. But they were very, very nice indeed. I finished two grades there. I don't know if the school still exists. There were boarders also, they came from other towns, and all these Romanian girls lived in the hall. It was forbidden to us to enter the hall, I never saw how they lived there. The boarders had the lunch in the Ursuline's building.

We learnt music also, choral works and history of music. Our teacher's name was Sarane. She was a very skillful, laical woman. We used to sing Schubert and Brahms compositions also. We had a very good choir and we had appearances also. We learnt how to cook as well: four girls from every class on every week. There was a kitchen in the school and it was well equipped with cooking utensils and dishes. We learnt how to cook in the middle school and high school also. There were four girls from every middle school and high school class who worked in the kitchen and everybody had her duty. Somebody was responsible for the laying, the other one for the scraping and so on. But when we cooked, we did it together. We learnt how to scrap, how to do the washing-up, how to lay the table, so special things which many of us didn't learn at home. They didn't know that the knife and the spoon had to be on the right hand side, and the fork on the left hand side. Right? How

should they know this? And the glass over here. There were all kind of glasses and we learnt how to put them on the table, where to put the small glass for spirit, and where to put the drinking glass... I don't know, I don't remember already. We learnt everything. In fact they took into all the class until everybody learnt it. We prepared side dish, soup, second dish and some dessert if we had enough time. We brought the ingredients, we cooked and ate it. And of course we wrote the recipes down. We brought a plenty of recipes and our teacher 'doamna Cimpeanu' [Mrs. Cimpeanu] was a very good housekeeper. For example she taught us to prepare egg-plants [vinete in Romanian] – I think that she was the first in Nagyvarad who heard about the vinete. They brought it to Transylvania from the Regat. She prepared roe, so she always liked very much the specialities. She was an excellent teacher. We learnt needlework and embroidery as well. That's why my hobby is the embroidering. We learnt to embroider, to use the sewing machine and everything else. We sewed knickers, slips and nightdresses with the sewing machine. For example, in the last grade of the middle school, we had to sew a Romanian folk blouse called 'ije' which was embroidered. [Editor's note: the Romanian spelling is 'ie', and is a sewed or embroidered women's shirt a part of the Romanian national dress]. I know all kind of needlework and embroidery.

Lili Szekely, a girl from our company, who is in Germany now, had a Romanian boyfriend. And her parents didn't intervene, they said nothing but the teachers found out this and they wanted to expel her. She was in the second grade in the Oltea Doamna high school. The teachers from the school could intervene in the relationships, and they could forbid the relations with the boys. It was forbidden to walk with boys in the street. The boyfriend of Lili, Mitu, was a really handsome boy. Mrs. Goiculescu, the headmistress, told Lili's mother to take her daughter to the gynecology and examined her if she is virgin or not. But Lili refused this, she didn't want to go to the gynecology. There was an enormous fuss, but finally she wasn't expelled. Mrs. Goiculescu, the headmistress of the Oltea Doamna high school, used to go by car on the streets and she checked if we wore the uniforms. If she found somebody without uniform, she took her/him with her car to the police. And the police drew up a protocol and fined the parents.

It was forbidden to go to the cinema. And once, together with my eight classmates we went to see a movie called Halalos tavasz [Deadly Spring] with Katalin Karady. Next day Klotilda Mater came very angry. 'Va place sa mergeti la film? You like to go to the cinema, don't you?' Those who were in the cinema had to stand up. I remember that I stood up. Trudi stood up, Papci too, so six from the nine girls stood up. 'You are expelled.' She expelled us for three days and we thought that we could sleep at least. But we couldn't sleep, we had to go to the school's kitchen and unshell bean and lentil instead of learning. They wanted to give us nine for our behavior, but finally they gave us ten. And the three girls who didn't stand up laughed like a drain. You richly deserve it, does it pay to be honest? No. No it doesn't. And we didn't go to the cinema in school time, only in the holiday.

We couldn't use the main street, we had to walk in the back alleys. And when I went to piano-lesson, I had to go on the main street for a while. I was afraid all the time that Mrs. Goiculescu came and took me to the police. That woman was a sadist. So the truth is that they introduced very drastic rules for the pupils. They made everything more severe. They believed that the children became well educated in this way. The forbidden things are much more interesting like the not forbidden ones.

In 1940 we became Hungary and they introduced the numerus clausus [3] in the Ursuline also. This meant that they admitted only one Jew in a class. It was a big fuss, because the boys had the

Zsidlic [the short form for Jewish high school], which was a 12 grades elementary, middle and high school. And we, the girls, were dropped out. Then the teaching staff of the boy's high school got together and they decided that the girls will attend the high school in the afternoon. The teachers who taught us probably got a higher compensation also. But this was an unofficial thing. We took examinations with the teachers and with the headmaster also. The teachers lectured the lessons and we learnt like in a private school. And it is very interesting, that in the paper called Zsidlic - I had a few copies - they wrote that we, the Jewish girls were dropped out from the high school Although is not true, because I attended the high school there. First they put us in the kindergarten. They kept the courses there. It was very uncomfortable, because we had to sit in those small desks. I finished there the third and fourth grade of the high school. I had to tell, that once I received a slip from that young boy who sat in the same desk. 'Answer if you want.' We wrote to each other for years, but I didn't even know how he looked. He put the slip in the desk and I put it also. I don't remember his name already, and we never met, although he always suggested that to me, but I wasn't disposed. More than twenty girls attended the high school. The Jewish girls had to choose between the Zsidlic and the Notre Dame, because there they were admitted too. Kati Deutsch, the wife of Gyuri Adam graduated there. But I don't know how she got there. Perhaps she got into the six per cent. For example, my cousin - who died in America – got into the six percent in the Oltea Doamna, she was the top pupil in her class. She learnt and graduated in that public school.

After High School

I graduated in 1942, two years after the annexation to Hungary. After that I wanted to become a doctor but I wasn't admitted to the university. I asked my uncle, Vili Molnar, who was the director of the Jewish hospital to employ me as a nurse. And he told me: 'Until I'm the director, I don't employ you.' I was a weak, puny and sickly child. And what to do now? I had to learn the sewing. My mother suggested that. And then I went to a sewing-tailoring course. I had my certificate somewhere among the photos, that I could work as a tailor or a sewing woman, but I never used that because I got married.

We had a company and I spent my free time with them. There were three Romanian boys and the others were Jews. We were six girls and I think more than six boys. My [second] husband was among them. And his fiancée, Edit Lang, was one of my girlfriends. When he was forced laborer, he supplicated in a letter the marriage by proxy, so a picture marriage. They had to send the data and they would receive a paper with the following text: Edit Lang and Andras Gaspar got married, they were considered husband and wife. This paper would make out from Andris' unit, where he was forced laborer. A lot of marriages took place this way. Quite a lot. The regular soldiers used to marry the girls from the town this way. But they didn't get the permit. They received a letter, that the picture marriage between Andris and Edit wasn't allowed. And Edit didn't come back [from the deportation]. If somebody told me then that I will be Andris' wife, I spat in his/her face. Although I was enough well educated to don't do such a thing. I didn't even think about, because he was Edit's fiancé!

We gathered here and there but mostly at our place, because we had the largest yard and garden and the company felt very comfortable there. We spoke only in Hungarian. We used to go to the dancing-school also. There we learnt modern dances, not Jewish dances. We learnt tango, waltz and they introduced later the Charleston. I don't know Jewish dances. We didn't dance in the school

or in the Jewish school. So we were raised very worldly. We weren't Jews with payes – those went to the Talmud school. Those belonged to another caste. There were different castes: we were the enlightened Jews and the others were the religious Jews, who weren't disposed to mingle with the secular Jews. There was an enormous distance between the two castes. The the religious Jews had a district around the Kolozsvari street. They lived there in a gaggle. The religious Jews had a rule which forbade the men to pass through between two women. So they were awful bigots. And then we, the girls, waited around the Kolozsvari street, we watched the coming men, and one of the girls went near the wall and the other one at the edge of the sidewalk. And the man had to pass through between us. Then they went down to the street and skirted us. We were children, we were no better than we should to be.

I spent the Saturdays and the holidays together with the young people. It was forbidden to do something on Saturday. For example, it was forbidden to go to the cinema. I couldn't say that I didn't go, but without my grandparents' knowledge. My mother knew it. She didn't oblige me to observe the Saturday, only in front of the grandparents. On Saturdays we used to say that we went to walk and we went to the cinema. But who came to check us? Sometimes even my mother wanted to detach from the traditions, but she didn't want to get known, because if somebody saw me, he/she repeated that to the grandparents. And my mother didn't want to outwit them that much. But this didn't really disturb me. She didn't force me to approve my grandparents' principles. 'You have to do it how the grandparents demand.' - this was the motto – 'Do it how they request! At least in front of them.' Probably she wasn't a believer also, but I don't know. We didn't speak too much about religious things, this wasn't a topic of conversation. I believed in my truth and I behaved accordingly. My grandparents didn't know about a lot of things. They were old and I was young and I wasn't disposed to return to their allegiance. My grandparents moved to Varad [already] because they needed a permanent medical supervision and they lived together with us. My youngest uncle remained in Zerind and he managed the estate.

On Saturdays was forbidden to make a fire, my grandfather forbade it. It was forbidden to turn on the light also. We couldn't even lift the receiver. So it was forbidden to use any electrical apparatus on Saturday. And the maidservant knew that if the phone rang she had to come in and lifted the receiver. And after she lifted the receiver, you [or the grandfather] could speak. The maidservant used to turn the light on, and she made a fire in the afternoon in wintertime. My grandfather always told that I'm the biggest shiksa [non-Jewish woman in Yiddish] because I was revolted permanently. For example: 'Grandpa, where is written in the Bible that we must not turn the light on? Please show me that part!' And because of this he was a little angry with me. My brother took the dispute seriously, but I joked rather. He didn't want to become religious, he argued with everything. For example, the Jewish religion taught that the Earth is plain, not spherical. I asked what happen if somebody reach the edge of the Earth? He/she fall down...? But my brother explained this scientifically to my grandfather [that the Earth is spherical]. And finally my grandfather told to my brother 'You know what? You have right. But I couldn't believe this. It's written in the Bible this way so I have to accept it.' Then you dispute with him! There are some nonsense things. They exaggerated the restrictions of the former times. None of my uncles were religious. And this was interesting. They weren't religious, but they didn't confess it.

I used to go to the theatre from infancy. In the house lived an other family also, the Toth family. They were actors and their daughter was actress too. Janka Pogany and Elek Toth were two famous

names, the old people from Nagyvarad remember them even now. So this Janka Pogany loved me very much. When I was 4-5, I went to the theatre already. The theatre from Varad was of very high standard and nice, but it wasn't large. There were intimate and very good performances, but secular performances. I saw all kind of performances. I remember that the operetta called 'Ciganyszerelem' [Gypsy Love] moved me very much. [Editor's note: Ferenc Lehar shows the romanticism and mistery of romance in Vienna-Budapest of the 1910s in this 3 act opera. The essence of the story is: Dragutin the wealthy boyar wants to marry her beautiful daughter Zorika with the boyar Jonel Boleszku. But Zorika loves Jozsi, the gypsy.] An actor called Barankai was the gypsy baron, and he was wearing such a make-up I was terribly afraid of him – I remember this.

I went in for sports also. I swam, moreover I took part even in swimming matches at county level. I tell you straight, that's why I'm still alive at this age. There was a very nice lido in the park, and later they made it wider. I used to go to the lido early in the morning, when nobody was there. The water was clean, and I remember that the bottom of the pool was painted blue, and the water seemed nice blue from that. And then I swam a few hundred meters. This happened every morning in the summer, from age 7 until I got married. And in wintertime I skated. I liked very much to dance also, and I used to go to rhythmic gymnastics together with my cousins, twice a week. I played tennis frequently in the summer holiday, because my uncle had a tennis court in the end of the garden. We went there every morning with my cousins and the neighbors. I used to play tennis in skirt. We used to go on excursions, although there weren't forests around Nagyvarad. But only we, the young people went on excursion, my mother never joined us. My father never came with us also. He was busy all the time with his estate. He had no time for holiday, too. He said he was happy there. My mother let me went on excursions, she wasn't afraid, she put her trust in me. We were boys and girls [together], so my mother raised us in a very modern way.

In 1937 we spent the summer holiday in Borszek, they took me there in every summer because I was a thin, puny girl and I needed a change of air. The doctor advised my mother to take me to Borszek, on the stipulation that we had to remove the drapery and the bedspreads, because those could contain bacilli. Not to fell sick. It was terrible how they protected me from anything, not to fell sick. We went to Borszek by cab. It was expensive, but it didn't matter. My poor mother didn't bear the serpentine road, she always felt unwell. We spent there maximum 3-4 weeks. We ate in the kosher restaurant. It happened that we were just two, my mom and me, but sometimes my two cousins from Tasnad were together with us also. Sometimes my mother went together with the three girls, and sometimes my cousins' mother, auntie Tusi, that is the short form of Etus. We lived in a mansion, we had to reserve a room with four beds and I remember even now where the mansion was. If we go to Borszek now, I should find the mansion, it was near downtown, at right hand side. There were many young people. We got acquainted there with young people from Kolozsvar, Nagyvarad and a few girls and boys from Bucharest too. And the young people came together. Once I saw that a young man looked at me, and I asked him why on earth? He said: 'I have a classmate, who resemble very much to you.' I knew that he is from Kolozsvar. 'Don't joke with me.' 'Some kind of distant cousin…?' Finally we found out that it was my brother [who resembled to me].

My mother got acquainted with the other mothers, they sat on the terrace and we, the youth, went to walk. And we went on excursion. If you went on excursion from Borszek, you could find beautiful places in every direction. Once my uncle from Kolozsvar came to visit us. He rented a room there,

but he came alone, I don’t know why. Perhaps he had a quarrel with his wife. And we, the young people who got acquainted there, used to walk arm-in-arm, - one boy one girl - on the street in the evening. And we occupied the entire street. And who wanted to pass through, he/she had to ask us to open a gate for them. And my uncle noticed this. And when I went home jolly, with a laugh, my uncle bawled at me: ‘you are unashamed of doing this…’but what we did? He told that I walked arm-in-arm with two boys. One was on my rigth side and the other on the left. Try to tell this to the young people of today… But my uncle was shocked by this. He nettled me so much, that I began to cry. He told me that I ought to think shame of myself, because a girl didn’t behave so. All right, but everybody…’It’s all one to me, I talk about you. Don’t do such a thing anymore.’ ‘I shouldn’t…’But there wasn’t a problem to be Jew. They knew very well that we are Jews, because they asked us in which restaurant we ate, and we told them that in the kosher one. But they didn't care.

I didn't set on a high value on something. For example I told once [at home] – I think I wasn’t a schoolgirl yet - that I never had a pink dress. On the next day I got a pink dress from my mother. I could exploit my mom shamelessly, but I knew, that if I wished for something, I got it. In 1941 I had my own camera already, I got it as a birthday present from my uncle, my cousins' father, uncle Vili. My mother said that the photography does not look nice for a girl. But I wished a camera. Agi and Evi knew this, and they told their father. It was made by the Agfa company, it was like an accordion and I think that was a 6x6 format camera. I could make 12 small photos with my camera. It had to be operated with a long wiry thing [the cable-release], which I had to push and exposed this way. And how I rejoiced at my camera… I liked to take a photo about everything what lived and moved. I wanted to record everything and I took a plenty of photos. I think that I had some rolls of film which remained undeveloped. The camera had a brochure in his box, and I joined the instructions. The first few photos were unsuccessful, because I didn’t open the diaphragm correctly. And sometime the camera or the subject moved. It was forbidden to move, because otherwise the photo became obscured. The camera wasn’t so good like these from now, that you could move because it caught you in a split second, and I learnt this from my experience. It was used for the photo made in our yard, in which on one side of the bench Edit is sitting with her back and on the other side there’s Andris sitting, as if they were upset with each other. I took this photo. My mother took the next photo, on which we sat arm-in-arm on the bench, Andris sat in the center, and I was on his left side and Edit on his right side. Potyi Vadasz, a boy from our company, stood behind us. We called him Potyi because he was small. When I knit a pullover for Andris, – he was a tall, handsome boy – I told him that if he was as small as Potyi, I had less to work. He asked me if I should marry Potyi. I answered that never, because I was taller with a head like Potyi. We got the films from Varad, from the studio where they developed it. That studio was in the main street. The studio was called Foto-Revu, and we took the photos there to be developed. There were more studios, but this was the best known, because the word had it made the best pictures. The owner was a Jew, but I don’t remember his name anymore. His studio was really well equipped. We took the film out, we stuck it and we rolled up in silver foil. We took the film to the photographer, he removed it [from the silver foil] and he developed and enlarged it. And he made so many prints, how many we needed. There was a young man in the studio where they developed the films and he gave me some advises when he saw the unsuccessful photos. I think that I enjoyed my camera more than everything.

My brother also attended school in Varad, the Jewish high school. He finished the tenth grade there, and then he went to Kolozsvar, to the ‘Liceul Pedagogic Universitar’ [Editor’s note: The institute in matter was the Teacher Trainer College, but it doesn’t exist anymore]. This was

supposedly the best school in Kolozsvar. He went in for sports also. We used to swim and skate in the same place, we always went together until he lived in Varad. It didn't matter that he was two years older than me. He introduced me to his company from Kolozsvar too. If I said that I didn't want to go, because I had no acquaintances there, he said that he wouldn't go also. He was a very good child. He was too good, and he always said that he wouldn't get marry, he will live together with mom. He stood aloof from politics. He preferred the cultural activity. He liked very much to write. I remember this: 'What are you doing?' 'I write, please let me...give me a little time!' - because he was inspired then. After the graduation he learnt chemistry, because my uncle decided that my brother will inherit the distillery from him. The distillery still exists in Kolozsvar. My brother finished the middle school, and at age 16 he went to Kolozsvar, to my uncle's family. They had no children. I went together with mom to visit him in Kolozsvar, before he became a forced laborer. This happened around 1942... And then I saw him for the last time.

He was 20 when he became forced laborer and he was taken to Nagybanya. And I never saw him again. He was in Nagybanya for one, one and a half year. We corresponded with him, and we sent packages monthly. His letters were censored. He was very careful, because if somebody wrote something ambiguous, they didn't send the letter and punished the writer. So he didn't write any ambiguous thing, it didn't worth. And then the Germans took him to Poland. After I came back, [from the deportation] I went to Kolozsvar and I inquired about him... but his whole troop disappeared. He and his classmates, a troop with 25 members disappeared. They joined the partisans? They were shot by the partisans? Maybe the Germans caught them? I shall never find out. I hoped that the Russians captured him, and he will come home from somewhere. I hoped for a very long time. But in vain... And the most terrible thing about it is, that I don't have even one photo with him.

After I graduated I was single for a very short time, because I had a suitor since the eleventh grade. He was called Sandor Taub, and his nickname was Saci. He was the son of a wealthy family, his father was a landlord and he had mill also. They lived in Alsoszopor, this village belong to Szatmar county now. They were the wealthiest in the village. Saci attended school in Varad. When my parents were together, they lived in Alsoszopor too, they had an estate there. And we were neighbors with Saci's family. And when he [Saci] ended up in Varad, we met and he 'reproached' me that [at that time when we lived in Alsoszopor] he came to me for Easter sprinkling and I received him in the bed. [Editor's note: Sprinkling is an Easter folk custom, it is thought to be a booster of fertility and have a cleaning effect, this is why girls and women were sprinkled. Sprinkling takes place on the second day of Easter, on Easter Monday. This custom is beginning to fade away.] I was around age 2 then, because I was 3 when my parents divorced. And so we became friends and he began to court me. He was older than me, and when I graduated he was summoned to forced labor. He spoke with my mother, because he was afraid that he would lose me. He told that if he went to forced labor, I marry somebody else, and better we married before he joined the army. We had to marry because of this. There were such things then. My mother wasn't agreed, she opposed the marriage tooth and nail: 'My daughter, don't do this!' Try talking with an girl in love... And I don't know even now, why mom got agree, although we were very young. Perhaps because I wanted so. The fact is, that we married in 1943 in Nagyvarad.

Marriage

It was a great fuss... they brought the chuppah and they cooked and baked all the night. I went to my room and I slept. I didn't care for it. They waked me up in the morning and the woman hairdresser came... My dress was ready, because I married in a white suit, not in a long dress. Then came the dresser, they fussed around me, and they made up me also. Once the door of my room was opened – I don't know why they didn't use the bathroom for the arrangements – and the groom came in. Then all these women shouted at him: 'Please go out immediately, you must not see the bride!' 'But she is my bride!' - I can hear even now how he raised his voice. But he was turned out. And I found out later that the men had to put on a white tallit or something like this. But he didn't put up that on his suit, he put it up under the suit. So he married in a black suit. And of course the invited relatives were there also. The wedding took place in our house, in Varad. We had yard too. We went to the yard, my poor grandmother went in with me, and I think that my groom was seen in by his father. I remember that my grandmother was switched on very much, she needed a beaded hat, and she had the beaded hat made, although I was the bride not she... They stood the groom under the chuppah and I had to walk round him. I had to walk round him three times, and my poor grandmother stumbled over something. The guests stood round the chuppah. And of course the neighbors were there also. There were only a few Jews in that area. They couldn't see anything from the street because of the gate, and then they climbed the fence of auntie Matasits and they watched the wedding from there. They didn't see something like this before – even I saw wedding only when we peeped in to the temple's yard. None of my relatives got married until then. We had to drink wine from a glass, and we had to break the glass after that. This is the 'Mazel Tov'. The ceremony ended with this. The rabbi shouted 'Mazel Tov', this meant good luck to you or something like this. But it was a really stunt. I didn't like it at all. But seriously. The rabbi told us in Hebrew that we could kiss each other, and then we went to the dining room. There was an enormous 'U' shaped table, we sat at the head of the table but there was only one place setting. When I noticed that I asked: 'Who wouldn't eat, me or my husband?' 'You have to eat from the same plate!' I began to laugh like a drain...It was 'gold soup', meat soup in fact, and I remember exactly that really looked like the gold, and one of us could eat with his/her right hand and the other with the left. I don't know how we did it, but we laughed more than we ate. I don't remember the different dishes although there was side dish too, I remember only the gold soup. There wasn't any kind orchestra on my wedding. We had no music and the quests didn't sing near the table Later they took me to my room, I got changed, and they called the cab already and we went for honeymoon to Pest. This happened right after the dinner because we had the train around 4-5pm. They took us to the railway station by cab, and it was very affecting, because my mom gave us the tickets as a present and she put some money in my pocket too. My father-in-law put some money in his son's pocket also, they took care about our spending money this way. And then we went for honeymoon to Pest, for two weeks. The room was reserved already...Oh dear, I knew the name of the hotel...but I don't remember now. I passed through on so many things that I couldn't remember every minor issue.

I was 19 and my husband 21 at that time. And after the marriage I moved to Alsoszopor, to my father-in-law's house. I lived together with my husband for one year. We lived together with my husband's parents, they had a nice, two-storied house. My husband's parents were well-situated very nice people. I had no problems with them at all. My mom came to visit us every six weeks or two months. She didn't come more often, because she didn't want to disturb us. She missed me of course. My brother lived in Kolozsvar at that time.

We had a common household with my mother-in-law. They didn’t have kosher household, although they were Jews. They weren’t religious at all, and this suited me very much. They slaughtered the geese and the hens, which is forbidden for the Jews [only the shochet can slaughter]. They ate pork meat also. My mother ate with them, but for example my grandfather wouldn’t eat there. Maybe they used to go to the temple when they were young, but I never went with them to the temple. There was a synagogue in the village and there were very religious Jews also. It was a very nice and loyal village. For example we were on good terms with the Catholic priest. My neighbors were Hungarians too and they had a small boy, who loved very much my father-in-law: ‘Uncle! Uncle!’- he wanted to be together with my father-in-law all the time. They were Hungarian people and we used to visit each other. So, there wasn't anti-Semitism in the village.

There was Hungarian era 2 then, they introduced the Anti-Jewish laws 4, and the Jews lived in poor conditions. The situation was better in the villages, but in the towns there were a lot of restrictions, regarding what the Jews could do, and where they could travel. So they persecuted the Jews already. There were disturbances. They attacked us in the street. Although we weren't Jews with payes.... but they beat some of us. There were fascists too. The most painful was that these things tried my poor grandfather very much. They lived in Varad already when the Hungarians came in, and Zerind remained in Romania [following the Second Vienna Dictate] 1. The Hungarian-Romanian border was near Zerind, so my grandfather’s estate remained in Romania. He got a stroke because of this. Then my grandfather was 76 and my grandmother 72. Our circumstances of life remained almost the same, because my uncle took over the estate from my grandfather. The post worked, my uncle could send money through the bank, and there was no problem. My poor mother felt sorry only for her younger brother, who remained in Zerind and once they arranged a meeting on the no-man's-land. They didn’t take me with them, because I was a very sensible child. I’m a sensible woman also. But my mom went, and she met her younger brother on no-man’s-land. After 1940 we couldn’t go [through the border]. But the furnishing was weaker because of the war. The Germans warred already. We couldn’t obtain this, we couldn’t obtain that. They came to us from Romania, they brought flour, sugar and basic aliments, that’s why we had no problems with the food. But the atmosphere was bad because of the war. The Romanians weren’t deported.

We lived far from Varad, and we didn’t fell the restrictions so much. I went only a few times to Varad, because my dear husband was jealous. He didn’t like if went to Varad, because I used to meet my old friends there. And I didn’t want to provoke him. So I went perhaps two times to Varad during that one year, as long as I was married. The topic of conversation was the everyday life. And we were afraid from the war. We were very, very afraid. We could listen to only one radio station, the station from Pest. The others were forbidden because they were anti-German. And the Hungarians were allied with the Germans already. Some people were reported by their neighbors, that they listened to the Voice of America and London. These two [radio stations] were the bloody-bones. They heard it from the street or the servant related it, nobody knows. The Hungarians never reported each other... Probably they got something to report more people. These were the arrow-cross men. At that time they used to seal up the radios. But there was a method to remove the seal from the radio. So everybody was everybody’s enemy. You didn’t know who would attack you or who was ill intentioned. I had no problems with our neighbors at all. The neighbors mentioned above, who lived on the other side of the street, weren’t Jews. They could write down what I told, and if they reported me, the arrow-cross men would take me away. They didn’t verify at all, they didn’t have to prove that you said that or not. So everybody lived afraid.

Ghettoization

The atmosphere changed slowly. We were afraid, although we didn't know from what. The air vibrated around us... We didn't think about what will happen, because we couldn't listen to the radio. They probably announced that the Jews were deported from Poland and the French Jews were deported also [in March 1942]. But we didn't know this. That's why everybody was shocked, [mostly afterwards] mainly the Americans, that no man alive lift a finger to save the Jewish people... They couldn't or they didn't want. I don't know. In those days we lived for our family. We phoned continually, but we took care what we said. We was so afraid, that we didn't dare to say the real things through the telephone We were afraid that the central intercept the calls. And one denunciation [accusation] was enough. My mother-in-law used to go to the kitchen in the morning, where were servants also. In the villages the people could get job easier.

I remained pregnant. We called my mother and there was a discussion with the parents of my husband. The discussion took a week. My father-in-law was a very intelligent man, he used to listen to the radio [until it was possible] and he heard a lot of things from the foreign radio stations. We decided to abort the baby – we went to [Nagy]Karoly, because there was a doctor who did the operation. My father-in-law tried to persuade us to abort the baby, he said that it would be better this way. But of course we kept this in secret. I passed through this pretty hard. My husband was forced laborer, he couldn't come home. I think that we wrote this to him, but just when I got through. If I had that baby, I didn't live now... They killed all the mothers who had baby...I lived together the parents of my husband for half a year after my husband became forced laborer. We were on very good terms. I was deported from there.

In May [1944] the gendarmes with sickle-feathers entered and we just watched how they invaded the village. We didn't know why. And we just looked why these gendarmes came? What they were looking for? They looking for somebody, maybe for a delinquent? We were the delinquents...In the village, in Szopor, we didn't use to listen to the illegal radio stations. Even walls had ears there. We listen to those stations in Varad, because there was nobody who could do in us. But in the village we didn't. A very decent Hungarian officer was lodged into the spare room, who used to take the dinner with us. This chief lieutenant spent only 2-3 months in the house of my husband's parents. First, when my mother-in-law invited him, he didn't want to eat with us, he made excuses, but later he has got used to, and he always arrived to dinner. He drew our attention on everything, not to do this and that...He told that the strangers could provoke us. Not to speak about anti-state things, not to blame Horthy, so we had to be very careful what we said. Not to speak even with the neighbor. And he was who asked me where is my mother and my father. I answered that my mother is in Varad, and my father in Hungary, in Hidasnemeti. He said that my father is surely Hungarian citizen, and we are Hungarian citizens also. I answered that my father is not a Hungarian citizen, we became Hungarian citizens in 1940, and my father, who lived in Hungary, remained Romanian citizen. He advised us not to tell this to anybody. Moreover I had to write somehow hidden to my brother – he was forced laborer then and the letters were censored – not to speak about this. I wrote it somehow, even my mother-in-law gave advises what to write to avoid the problems, otherwise they would locked up us, because we remained Romanian citizens after our father. But nobody knew this. So he was a very decent, jovial, graduate man. There were decent men in the Hungarian army also. I don't remember his name, because everybody from the family called him: 'Mr. Chief Lieutenant'. They didn't use to say his name. He said nothing about the deportation.

Maybe he didn’t know, maybe he didn’t want to frighten us. What we could do? We could go to Pest, because my mother-in-law was originally from there. And her relatives, her siblings and the grandparents survived. They lived in a safe house in Pest. We all could flee if we knew this, but who even think about?

They came to us also [when the ghettoizing took place]. The midwife came together with the nurse, who worked in the doctor’s office. They came in two. And I went up to my room, and she told what I could take with me. Two handkerchiefs, two knickers and so on. ‘You put on this slip, this knicker and this dress! And a jersey, shoes, stocking and nothing else!’. They didn't let me to take even an extra handkerchief... Of course they took away everything, but I had to watch, God damn it, as I wasn’t allowed to do what I wanted with my stuff. They sent other people everywhere. I relate what happened at my place. I don’t know who were in the other places. (After we came home from the deportation, that midwife never had an unbroken window. They put it one day and on the next day it was broken. This was the only way of revenge. But it was just malevolence.) They came with gendarmes, but the gendarmes didn’t come up to my room. The gendarmes surrounded the house. They put clothes on men also, they could took one day’s food with them. They didn’t say anything, it was forbidden to talk and to inquire.

They drove out us like the animals from the house. They didn’t take us directly to the railway station, first they kept us in the school for three days. But I don’t know why. The Hungarian inhabitants of the village watched how they drove in us to the voided school building... Then the villagers and the farmers began to come, everybody brought eggs, sugar, cakes and food. They [the gendarmes] didn’t give us anything. We spent there about five days, the villagers brought the food and they cried. They cried, because they said that they wouldn't see us anymore. How they found out this, I don’t know... And during these five days we slept on the floor, we had no even blankets. The villagers came in, during the night, and brought us pillows, quilts and blankets. So the villagers were very nice, they behaved fantastically. We had a small Hungarian sheep dog, called Buksi. It was a big fuss, – because it came with me – they didn’t want to let it in. But finally they let the dog in, it lay near me. We slept on the floor, because we didn’t bring bed-clothes with us. What was there...a procession... I don’t know how many we were, but the school building was full. There were adults, old people, cripple, blind and deaf. They gathered everybody. They had no regard for anybody. I didn’t know everybody. They took the jewelry away from us – we couldn’t take out any jewelry from there. After five days they lined up the families, and they called out us to the railway station, which was far enough. When we went to the railway station, a gendarme walked in front of us with the exhibits: silver candlesticks, jewelry and such values.

There happened a very nasty thing. One of the gendarmes shouted: ‘Bring a table here!’ Two young men came forward. 'No! Imre Taub and Miksa Taub have to bring it!’ So this was a kind of humiliation, because they were the wealthiest and top-ranking men in the village: my father-in-law and his younger brother. They brought the table there. They brought a chair also, the gendarme sat down and he wrote down everybody’s name. I don’t know where that list ended up. Then they entrained us and we were taken to the brick factory, near Szilagysomlyo. The whole Jewry of Szilagy county was gathered there.

A lot of people were there. I can’t tell how many, but quite a lot. I don’t want to plunge, but a few thousand people were there. We could buy tents, blankets and pillows from the peddlers who came there. The parents of my husband had money surely, because we bought a big tent. The three

Taub families lived in that tent together with the children. There lived my father-in-law with his two brothers, my cousin from Tasnad with his wife and his father, and my two cousins, Agi and Evi. My husband had no siblings, he was a singleton. Eleven people lived in this tent. Everybody had his/her small curtain. We spent 2-3 months in this tent. [Editor's note: Probably only a few weeks] The SS soldiers gave the orders in the ghetto, not the Hungarians. It was an enclosure, we couldn't go out. Who entered, remained there. I remember that the son of our acquaintance, who was forced laborer and got a few days permission, visited us. They didn't let him back to the army.

We, the youth, got together and we went to walk in the enclosure. We didn't have to wear yellow star, because they knew, that the people from there were Jews. The Germans are usually blonde. I was terribly blonde... There was a young German SS soldier, he was around 20, and I was scared stiff of him. He always picked on me. He came to me and he said that I'm not a Jew, I must be German. And he wanted to take me out from there. I was so afraid from him, that I never went out alone. I was afraid, that once he will catch my neck, take me in... and he will rape me. We always went two, three or four. I was afraid because I was a woman and he was a man... There was a family in Varad, the Deutsch family, their daughter is still alive, she was the same age with me, and she was my classmate. Her elder sister, Lili, went to bed with the camp commander and she saved her whole family. She rescued them to Switzerland. Once we saw some airplanes: 'Now the Americans come and liberate us'. But they didn't come.

There was a kerosene lamp, we used to cook with that. It was like a storm-lantern. It had a tank for the kerosene, and it had some bulb-like thing, just like the lamps, you had to wind up the match, ignited it and there was a thing from glass you could put a pot on. Every food had a smell of parafinny. We had no hotplate, because there was no electricity in the tent. We had kerosene lamp, we called it cooking lamp. They distributed the aliments and the ingredients for the food there. Everybody was put on. The boys helped us to sweep and to do other things, and we, the girls, got the milk cans and we had to deliver the milk for the small children from the camp. We had a list, and we knew who had small child, because the tents were numbered. I think the children got milk until age 6-7. We had to deliver this milk, and we finished our duty just in the afternoon, because there were a lot of people, the whole Jewry of Szilagy county were there. The Germans helped us out with the catering. There were SS and Hungarian soldiers also. Every family cooked separately. They didn't give too much food for a family, you didn't have enough. But we could divide up it. I think we got a lot of potatoes, which were the main food and the bread. Then we made watery soups, you just showed the vegetables to the soup, but it was good. Everything was good. And we didn't hunger. The deep religious Jews had to choose between eating and death.

I don't know how, but I had an extra dress in my package. Somebody came and related us that a girl's dress caught fire or something like this, and they heard that I had an extra pleated skirt and a blouse. He/she asked me if I could give those to the girl. 'Why not? Take it with you!' I gave the clothes to the girl, although she was a stranger for me... We had only one suit of clothes, and just we knew how we could wash that. We washed the clothes successively. My mother-in-law washed her clothes and she gave them to me. Then she washed my clothes. It was summer, and until the clothes became dry, the owner sat in the tent... We washed the undergarment and we put it to dry... there were wires and strings everywhere. It became dry quickly, and we put it on. You became very inventive in the last resort. The days passed, the young people always had to discuss about something. For example there were people who brought cards with them. Then we played

cards, and the others played chess.

My father-in-law sank into himself completely. He had no idea about the future, I could say that he didn’t speak at all. The SS soldiers knew very well who is wealthy. Probably they got a statement, because they knew exactly. They took my father-in-law with his two brothers to the office. And they were not coming, we waited, and waited, but why weren’t they coming, what’s wrong? Finally they brought them back... They interrogated him, where he put his money, where is his wealth and his gold. First they tried prettily, and my father-in-law told them that he had no money, but they didn't believe this. However it was true, because they ran through the money what they had. And then they beat his palms and foot-soles with a truncheon until he fainted. It was terrible. And he had to tell where he hid the jewelry, because it wasn’t enough for them what they found in the closets. There were rolling shutters in our house, we could drew up and down them. There is a place above the window, where the shutters were rolled up. They put there my entire dowry. And my father-in-law revealed this. The gendarmes visited the house, because the headquarters informed Szopor about the hidden things. My father-in-law lay ill for a long time, and he didn’t recover entirely until the total entraining began. He didn’t recover [entirely]. His hand looked so bad, that I never saw such thing in my life... My father-in-law was around age 45-50 then. My poor mother-in-law cried all the time when she looked upon his husband. ‘What the future had in store for us?’ But nobody could answer this question.

Auschwitz

On a day the SS soldiers took us to the railway station and entrained us in cattle-trucks. They squeezed sixty people in a truck, more families together. Everything what we had remained in the camp. We took some food with us, but before the entraining they took the food away from everybody. That was a dread. My SS acquaintance let me keep my bag. I carry the food in small bag, which looked like a sac, and he let me keep it. This was a nice gesture from him. And then we started. We were entrained on 4th of May 1944, so I spent my birthday in the cattle-truck. [Editor’s note: Anna Gaspar misremembers, because the Jews from Szilagysomlyo were deported on 31st of May, 3rd of June and 6th of June 1944. They deported 7851 Jews from there.] And we went for a very long time. You could imagine what was there...that we had no food. They opened the door once a day, then we could go to number one and number two, and they gave us bread and margarine. And once they didn’t open the doors for two days. We were closed for two days and two nights. If somebody had to do number one, he/she had a pee through a gap. Nobody did number two.

We arrived to Auschwitz. It was night. They opened the door of the cattle-truck and men in zebra suits got on the truck. We thought that they are mad, because they behaved so. But seriously. They mumbled and tried to explain something. They said: ‘Gave the children to the old people!’ ‘Gave the children to the old people!’ So they tried to advertise us, that the mothers who held a baby in their lap, were taken to the gas-chamber. That's why they told us to give the children to the old people. They were old Polish haftlings. They were there since one or two years. And they spoke a bad German, because they were Pole. But the mothers didn’t give the children. Those who had no old relatives what could do? Or those who had children led by the hand? The mothers didn’t give those also.

We got off. They told us of course that the women had to stay on the right side and the men on the left. In separate groups, five in a row. I took my mother-in-law's arm, and my aunt, together with her daughter, Evi, were in front of me. [Editor's note: Eva Gaspar refers not to her aunt called Etus Weiss from Tasnad and her daughter Eva (Evi) Friedmann, but to the sister-in-law and her daughter of Eva Gaspar's father-in-law.] There stood a man with flashlight, - later we found out that he was Mengele - together with a few SS officers. My aunt and my cousin, Evi, were in front of me, and Mengele directed them to left. And when I got there, he directed me to right. I told: 'I'm not mad to go to the right alone!' And I tried to go with my mother-in-law [to right]. She had a shawl on her head, because she felt cold. And the SS told us: 'Die Frau nicht!' [The woman not!]. 'If you don't let my mother-in-law to go to right, I go with her to left!' Then he took out his handgun and pointed it at me. He told that he would shoot me, if I didn't go to right... Thus it was thanks to Mengele that I'm alive. Because those who went to left, were taken straight to the gas-chamber. There wasn't getting away.

I went to right with the other young women. They drove in us in a large room. There we had to stay five in a row as well, because the Germans were maniacs. We had to keep order! Five in a row! We had to take off our clothes, the SS soldiers walked among us and they watched us. The lower age limit was 18, depending on pour looks. If they were young looking, they admitted 50 years old women also, but the age limit was around 30.

The other group, which went to left, was taken directly to the gas-chamber. I didn't know this then, I just noticed a permanent, very strange and terribly tang smell around the camp. The smell of the burnt flesh. This smell haunted me during many years, and even now, if I think of that, I'm on the verge of bursting into tears. That my grandfather and my mother... went together to the gas-chamber. And they had to take her clothes off... and when they turned on the faucets, because there were faucets in the gas chamber, gas flowed instead of water. I found out just later what happened exactly. A doctor from Varad, Dr. Nyiszli, who came home, worked there, in the incinerator. This doctor worked there, in the incinerator. And he published a book. I read it, and I felt sorry so much, that I was sick for two weeks. When I imagined that my mother had to take her clothes off in front of her mother and father... they were very prissy and very shied! Up to this day I awake when I see in my dream my mother naked in front of my grandfather. This haunted me. I think that the title of the book is 'Orvos voltam Auschwitzban' [Auschwitz. A Doctor's Eyewitness Account] [Miklos Nyiszli: I was Doctor Mengele's Assistant. The Memoirs of a Physician from Auschwitz, published first in 1947.] Andris wanted to buy it, but I forbid this. Somebody loaned the book for me, and it was enough for me to read it once. I became ill from this book.

I didn't know anything about my mother, the connection broke off entirely. I know that she was together with my girlfriend, Trudi. They gathered them in Varad, in the brick factory, and they were deported from there, And then my mother told Trudi that 'Trudi, I shouldn't see my children any more.' Those were my mother's last words. She was a very good mother. Her cousin's husband, Dr. Molnar, [the husband of the daughter of my maternal grandmother's sibling] Vilmos Molnar found a cellar, a bunker, where they could hide from the deportation. We had to build a bombproof cellar also. They knew already that they would be deported to Poland, and he invited my mother to join them to the bunker. My mother told him not to hide there, because the soldiers will find them. My mother asked him this, and finally they didn't hide in the bunker. (Thirty people survived in that bunker, they weren't deported. The soldiers didn't find them. I found out this later.) Dr. Molnar

continued his activity in the camp also, and he was alive when the liberation took place. But he died in the camp, a stray bullet killed him. Somebody just pulled the trigger and killed him. So he didn’t come home.

They stood me upright mother naked and they walked around me. The SS soldiers selected me first. They remarked me, because I was very blonde – my hair was gold-blonde – they made me sat down on a chair and they trimmed my hair. They cropped me with the shearer. The other women said later, that I watched with turned away head, how my curls fell down. I had shoulder-length hair, I wore it unfastened, I didn’t like if they tied it. Then they whispered, because it was forbidden to talk: ‘We escaped.’ They thought that I was the deterrent, and they will remain untrimmed. But they were wrong. They cropped everybody. The shoes were in our hand, we had to dip them in a fluid, and we got a dress. A long, gray dress. Some even got a belt. The dress was similar to the nun’s dress, only the gray color was the difference. I didn’t get a belt and I went up to the SS woman, who was with us and gave the dresses, and I asked her prettily: ‘Bitte schon...’ [Please...], gave me a belt. I got a slap in the face, that I saw stars. It was the first such kind of experience, because nobody beat me until then. ‘Now! There is your belt!’ I swore that I wouldn’t make a single observation in front of an SS. We had no rights there, we weren’t considered people, and they treated us like the animals or even worse. That was a dread.

They began to register us, they wrote a number near the names. Everybody got a number, and we had no more name, we became just a number. They stuck the number and a triangle on everybody’s dress – we had a yellow triangle and the Polish a red one. We didn’t wear the Star of David, just a triangle and a number. We were the emancipated Jews: They called us ‘Zigeuner Bande' [Gipsy band]. It wasn’t enough that we were Jews, they considered us gipsy also. We were the assimilate Jews. We got a mess-tin and they drove in us in a structure, in a longish barrack. There was nothing in the barrack, it was totaly empty It was a half-finished barrack. We were there for 2-3 days. We didn’t get food at all. Fortunately it began to rain, and the rain flowed in. We drank the rainwater from our mess-tin. It is interesting; you couldn’t have enough with rainwater. But we drank it, because filled our stomach. I say that we weren’t in our right mind then. For example, we talked about how we will lie down in the mud. Because it rained. ‘How we will lie down there?’ We looked for a place, shrank up and slept. We slept! It wasn’t cold, but in Poland the climate is raw and very bad. The air was very wet. After three days we got margarine and bread, and a mess-tin of beet soup for dinner. Later they gathered us again, five in a row of course, and they entrained us. That’s why I had no tattoo. We spent only 4-5 days in Auschwitz. Those who remained there, had their number tattooed on their arm.

They entrained us how was usual in Germany. Thirty people to the right and thirty to the left, and a very young, 16 years old SS soldier in the middle of the truck. His mission was to guard us. The cattle-truck was closed, he could go out but we not. If he went out, he closed the door from outside. It wasn’t a girls dream for him neither, because he had to sleep on a bench. We slept on the floor. There was a bucket on both sides, we did number one and number two in those. The buckets were emptyed from time to time by a stronger woman and the SS soldier. This young man – a good-looking, handsome child – probably was bored, because during the day, when we had to sit round in the truck, he used to ask us: ‘What you did?’ ‘What I did?’ I did nothing.’ ‘And you?’ Every asked person answered the same. ‘Then why are you here?’ He thought that we are regular prisoners. I told to him: ‘Juden! We are Jews!’ ‘What does this word signify?’ - the young man didn’t

know... I told him that this is our religion. ‘You are here for this?’ ‘Yes. For this.’ This young soldier got a big portion of food every day. He ate from it, and he gave us what remained. He was humane. He did everything he could. We got food also. We got carrot or cattle-turnip soup, once a day. And we got barrack bread, which was divided in three and a half portion. It meant less than a third part of bread for a person. And we got margarine also. This was the ration. We didn’t get water. We got coffee, bitter coffee, and we drank that instead of water. Everybody had her mess-tin, what she got in Auschwitz. I remember as well, that we hanged up the mess-tins on the nails which were in the wall of the truck, not to occupy some place, because we were crowded there. Once the train jerked and the ice-cold coffee spilled on my head. On my close-cropped head....So it was terrible...

Forced Labor in Riga

Then we arrived to Riga [to Latvia]. There they waited us already. We got on a truck, and we went through the town. That was a great experience. It was a completely different world. There were no painted buildings, the houses were built from red bricks. Riga is a very nice town. There was no warlike atmosphere. The people walked about and the stores were open. They stopped and looked at us. ‘Who are these close-cropped women?' We were the first group. They took us to the other end of the town and they lodged us in a brick building. There were rooms in the building. I don't remember already that we were 25 or 30 in a room. They told that the Luftwaffe [the German air force] took over us. We found out that we had to make lawn for an airfield. This means we had to cut a square shaped portion of the grass, we knew the size we had to cut out, we had to dig under it and to take it elsewhere and to place them side by side. So we had to turf an area. This was a labor camp. There were no men groups just several hundred women. The airfield from Riga was enormous, you couldn’t see the whole area from the ground.

I was there until autumn. We had no watch, we had no sense of time. We noticed only that the leaves fell or is cold outside. They took and brought us back on foot every day. They counted us in the morning, at noon and in the afternoon also. So they counted us all the time, to see if somebody is missing. We were six in a group, from the same village. We got our minimal ration. The soup was thick, and contained meat pieces too. Nota bene, we belonged to the Luftwaffe. We got more bread, half bread was the ration, and we got margarine and marmalade also. We ate twice a day. We got even newspapers. We could read in the evening, it was daylight, because Riga belongs to the Baltic area, and the nights are very short during the summer. In comparison with what we passed trough, we lived in good circumstances there. But there was a drawback also: we were roasting under the sun all day long. Not to mention that we acquired needle and thread – there were wanglers there – and we cut off a strip from the dress and we tied up our head with that. We made belt also, and we got a zebra suit. Everybody had only one dress. We washed that in the evening and we put it on in the morning. We wore a kind of slip and knicker during the night. There was a Washraum [washroom] with faucets. The water was cold, but we could wash up at least. We acquired rags for towel, there were very smart wanglers, who could obtain and sale everything. I wasn't a wangler. Never in my life.

They put bromide in our food, to avoid the menstruation. They treated me for half a year after I came home. The bromide is a kind of sedative also. We found out later that we got bromide. The food what we got had a strange taste, but we didn’t know from what. One of us, poor Ica, menstruated normally, although she was hearty eater. She was in trouble. But the others didn’t

menstruate. It seems that they gave us such a dose of bromide, that we had no problems in the labour camp. We didn't menstruate in the labour camp. I came home but I had no period. And Dr. Kupfer - he was a writer also, and he moved to Hungary later - cured me. I had menstruation just after that. After a long time. I spent six months in a Russian hospital.

I found out later that they brought a group from Varad to Riga also, and they dropped off like flies, because they got a touch of sunstroke. Me, who used to go to the lido, under the burning sun, I never had to put anything on my head, I resisted the sun. But the religious Jews, who didn't use to do gymnastics and didn't bask in the sun, were pale and sickly. They dropped off like the flies. They took in the sick people to the 'Revier' [to the prisoner's hospital]. Every camp had a hospital, but God forbid how was that: it was enough to come by the hospital to feel the terrible smell. They died there. They had so bad burns, that they didn't survive. I escaped none the worse.

We used to chat, sing and tell tales in the evening. I was together with a lot of women from Munkacs and Kassa. There were mostly Czech and Ukrainian women in the camp. And I mentioned that they were more cultured, more decent, so they got a better education than us. Auntie Erzsi gave lectures about literature, music, poetry and everything. When we felt that we were at the end of our tether, auntie Erzsi upheld us. She was much elder than us, she had no children, and I think that she worked in the education, perhaps she was a schoolmistress or a teacher, but I don't know it for sure. She had a very good memory, she narrated the stories instead of reading out. From where we could get books in the camp? I got 3-4 German books just when I was in the Russian hospital. Auntie Erzsi gave the lectures from memory. After the lecture we debated that. We debated that who heard about this and that and who didn't. We used to sit round her in the evening when we couldn't sleep or when we rested during the day, and she upheld us with her stories. And she was so funny. We ate, and after a hour she asked us: 'You ate the food already? I eat the nassak now'. 'Nassak' was the name of the extra food, what we got sometime. 'I winkle out the leftovers from my teeth.'. So poor of her said that she had enough one more time with the leftovers... She was so humorous. I don't know what happened with her later, because when we fled from the Russians - the SS soldiers drove us - she fell behind. She knew Czech and the Polish people understood that. And the Germans used to shoot the runaways dead.

We had a relatively normal life here [in Riga], they didn't beat or torture us, even the privates behaved very nice. On the airfield we worked for the Luftwafe, not for the SS. The privates were very really nice with us. If they saw that somebody fainted, they slashed water on her, and took her to the shade. Then let her to rest before continuing the work.

The Latvian Jews took their money with them when they were ghettoized. They took their small stuff with them, and they had money also. Later they found out that money had no value in the camp. You couldn't bribe the SS. For example, if you would like to buy something from somebody, you couldn't pay with zloty. They used money instead toilet paper, so the closet was full with zloty.

Forced Labour on the Baltic Sea

They told us in a morning 'Now, take your stuff and we go on a trip!' We traveled by a ship called 'tengerfenek' [sea-bottom in Hungarian]. It had no name, the prisoners named it 'sea-bottom', because it looked like a bottom and it floated. It was like an oval platter, and had walkways with barriers. The guards were up there. The bottom of the ship was empty, and we were lodged there. We saw the sea only when we were embarked, and after the embarking just the sky. We didn't

know what will happen. Maybe they wanted to sink us, maybe they took us somewhere. It was a terrible panic there. The ship was black. I was black, so they could take and bring us during the night, because nobody could see us. This ship belonged to the army, so it was a service vehicle. There were two ships, and we found out later that one of them was sank, and just the other reached the Baltic sea. A girl escaped from the sank ship, she swam out and fastened on to our ship. That girl related that they felt once that their ship was sinking, and they noticed that the soldiers disappeared And she, who was a good swimmer, fastened on to our ship and a humane soldier fished her out of the water. The girl was maximum 15 years old.

We worked in a camp, which was improvised near the Baltic seashore. First we dug trenches and after that we built tank-traps. The tank-traps were three and half meters deep. Our entirely group (the six women from the same village) was there, and we had group norm. I had a disagreement also. In the nearby group was a woman, Kitti, who didn't use to work. She just held a spade, a hoe or a pickax in her hand, but she didn't work. I tolerated this for a few days, but then I said to her: 'Shame upon you! The others work instead of you' – 'Yes, it is easy for you, because you are used with this work from home!' I attacked her very badly: 'Well – I said – yes, I used to pickaxe in Varad, in the main street everyday!' If one of us felt sick, we used to do her duty also. But I couldn't tolerate if a healthy woman didn't work... The guard heard the quarrel, and he came there to ask what is the problem. And he told Kitti that 'I keep an eye on you! If you don't begin to spade, you get into trouble!' Kitti wasn't very glad, but I didn't care for it.

There were white nights near the Baltic sea. We returned to the camp, we had supper, we washed up and we prepared us to lie down. We weren't sleepy, but then we got used to. We got the minimal food: we got the three and half portions of bread, we got soup for dinner, they brought the soup to our workplace. We got coffee in the morning and margarine for supper. I can't eat margarine since then.

When we worked near the Baltic sea, we moved all the time. We finished a place and we went forward. The circumstances were almost the same, because the kitchen moved together with us. And the Revier was moved with us too. Sometimes we lived in barracks, sometime in small buildings. That was a very nice place, we lived in small cabins, and we had straw and blankets on the floor. But it happened that we had to live in a 'Zelt' [tent]. The girls lay on a rounded iron structure, but of course we put straw and blankets on the floor and we slept round. The stove was in the middle of the tent. And we brought twigs from the wood, we made a fire, and it wasn't so cold then. But we had to do the work. They let you home just when you finished the norm. It happened that we had to wait for more other groups, and then we sat down to rest. The guards were more decent, but they used to hit our back, as "l'art pour l'art", just for fun.. I was terribly afraid from beating, so I was careful, not to give them reason to beat me.

We had an interesting case. Our group finished the work, and the guard told us that we could go home, and he came with us. It was a nice, summer day, and we began to sing Hungarian songs. We went singing back to the camp. The camp commander noticed us – we had a very decent Lagerfuhrer [camp commander]. He didn't make things warm for us. He used to give wooden shoes to the people, whose shoes were damaged. The wooden shoes were nasty, but at least we didn't have to walk barefoot. So he did everything he could. So the camp commander came and told us 'I wanted to see those who came home with the first group!' - those who sang. The joke was that some people who weren't in the group, stood up also. But of course, we said nothing about this.

The camp commander declared loudly that we sang Russian songs and we are condemned to death... They drove in us in a barn. There was straw, because there were animals too. And they locked up the big door. The women from there began to cry, wail, scream and shout. I didn't cry, I didn't feel sorry for myself, that I had to die so young - and undeservedly. There I heard for the first time the Jewish death-song. They used to sing that song if somebody died. Nobody died in my family until that, so I didn't use to take part on funerals. Everybody was all in tears...They opened the gate in the dawn. It was dead silence, not a sound was heard. And the camp commander told us 'Go out!' What happened? There was a Hungrian soldier among the SS, who heard that we sang, and we sang in Hungarian. He went to the camp commander and told him that. He wasn't forced to tell it, who cared if another 25 Jews died? We found out this from the camp commander, and moreover he told us that he knew this already in the evening. 'You deserved the punishment!' So it was a terrible experience. It was thanks to a Hungarian SS that we are alive. We tried to find out who was that, but they didn't tell it. Anyhow, he was a decent man. The girl who sang the death-song told, that she would pray for the life of this soldier. She was a deep religious girl.

Once we found out that the Yom Kippur is coming. [In 1944 the Yom Kippur fell on 27th of September.] We talked over with the camp commander because it was possible – he had a lover from Munkacs, a girl called Szidi, who mediated between us – not to bring out the food. We stored what we got in the morning, they didn't take out the dinner at noon, because we would have the dinner in the evening. Because we wanted to go home and wanted to fast. The camp commander told us: 'Kinder' [Children] – he called us so – 'Kinder, you go to work, finish your duty and everything will be alrigth!' We got a very small norm for that day. And indeed, the whole team sat down, so we swung the lead. And what happened then? The controllers came to see us. Perhaps somebody reported us, we will never find out. And they saw that the whole line rested. Oh dear! They began to shout, they gave orders and a huge norm. They brought searchlights, we worked almost until morning, until we finished the norm – hungry and thirsty. We worked 36 hours instead of 24 with empty stomach. I took an oath that I shall never keep fast during my life... And I kept my oath.

The camp commander's lover, Szidi, was a Czech girl. She was religious, but she lived well. In the camp everybody took care only about herself. There wasn't a point of view, why she did it this way. She ate. But she never brought an extra piece of bread for us. She had enough and that's all. She lived in the same place, we slept next to each other, and we always knew, when she came home. She never went to work. I don't know what she did during the day. She couldn't sleep every night with the camp commander, because the controllers could come there everytime. And if the controllers found her there, they threw out the commander to the frontline. We had a Joker, who was sadist. He was an ugly, dark skinned, terribly bad man. And on one evening he stopped in the door and began to shout 'Who entered now?' It could happen that who lived on the other side didn't know that Szidi entered, but we knew. And he shouted 3-4 times: 'Tell me who entered!' Deathlike stillness. 'Alle raus! - Everybody out!' It was winter already. We got some padded coats. The stitches were coming out, they took out the lining. I had my boots from home. They were good, bespoke boots. We stood there in the cold, there was one meter of snow. He told us 'Take off your coats!... Who entered?' Deathlike stillness. Nobody said a word. We had to undress everything. We had no stockings, we wore foot-rags, but we had boots. We took off our boots also, and we stood stark naked in the snow. Fortunately the latrine was outside, and a girl, who came out from a tent and wanted to go there, noticed the 25-30 [naked] angels, and she run straight to the camp

commander. The Joker and the camp commander were big enemies. The Joker wanted to become the camp commander. We heard how the small steps of the camp commander crunched on the snow, and when he saw us, he couldn’t believe his eyes: ‘Go in immediately!' Everybody snatched up her rags and ran in. Finally we got a day off and the Joker was taken to the frontline. I don’t know what the camp commander wrote in the official report, but the Joker was taken to the frontline.

We had to dig trenches in that big snow. The place for the tank-trap was traced out. We removed the snow, and we had to pickaxe, because the ground was frozen. The tank-trap was three and half meters deep and its bottom was approximately one meter wide. We had to leave a piece of land as bench, and we had to stand there and straighten the walls. There was some room for our feet, on a prominent section, just like a flower holder, so we put one of our legs on one such section, the other one on another one, and had to smooth out the wall this way, because we had to smooth it out because it had to be nice, because it wasn’t the same thing for a tank, it needed a nice wall... Because if we left any prominences, the guard immediately told us to scrape that away. It’s side wasn’t straight, it was askew. The wall was askew and we first made the straight wall, then the approach trenches, but this was much more difficult, because they were deeper. And we had to build this steep wall. Then the foreman came and received the work. And if he wasn’t happy with something, we had to keep smoothing it.

We had fire in the evening just until somebody was there to put the twigs on. But it wasn’t so warm, because we could see our breath. There was an old SS, he was the orderly guard. We called him 'opapa’. He was an old man with white beard, that's why we called him 'opapa'. He sat down near the fire, he put twigs on and he began to relate about his children and grandchildren. He told us 'You are young, and you will go home and find your family – he related these on one evening – but what will happen with us? They will kill us. You had to think about that. I don’t care for it because I’m old, but I feel sorry for the young people.’ He related a lot of things, but I remember just this. That we go home, but he will perish. And I would like to ask him, why he joined the SS.

Stutthof Concentration Camp

At very late winter [at late winter of 1944, or at early spring of 1945] they moved us to a relocation camp, to Stutthof [the settlement in matter is situated in Northern Poland, 34 km from Danzig]. ‘Hof’ means village. That was a dirty, messy, terrible relocation camp. There we suffered from hunger and we became lousy again, because the barracks were covered with lice. So it was a terrible place. There they sent people to the gas-chamber too, and we could feel the terrible smell. The people became rotten in front of the Revier, so there were terrible circumstances...The way out was to go to work, because there I got the minimal food. There were people who suffered from hunger. I didn’t. I wasn't a big eater during my life. Even now I eat a very small quantity. I didn’t suffer from hunger. I couldn’t say that I had enough even once, but we got the minimal food. But those who lived in relocation camps like Stutthof or Auschwitz, didn’t get that. Not to mention that they did nothing all the day, they just waited the counting. One of the guards shouted ‘Apell! - Counting!’ Then we stood there for more hours and they counted us. They counted us from the front and from the back also. So it was a kind of psychological offensive against us. They did nothing, just counted us. And they counted us how many times the guard wanted. Four times? Five times? Three times? In rain? In snow? And they took a look at everybody, and if they found a pimple on you, they sent you to the gas-chamber. This is not a joke. If a guard saw that somebody

couldn't stay longer he told 'You can go!' And you went. Willy-nilly. There was woman, who said, that she couldn't get up. Simply she couldn't get up. And then the guard always went in, to see if everybody came out. And if the guard found her lying, they took her to the hospital, and we didn't see her anymore. I tried to do everything so that to be always in ahead, and to remain healthy. I knew that those who were at the back, will perish. Ninety per cent of the people who remained in the relocation camps perished there. In the labor camp we got medicines also. We found out, that if we were in labor camp we could survive. Those who were healthy, didn't die in the labor camp. Who was sick, remained in the relocation camp and perished there. I didn't spend a long time there – they always needed workers somewhere – and I talked over with my group, that we would apply for the different works. And they took those who were more skillful. Then we succeeded to go away, because if you remained in the relocation camp, you perished there. You simply died of.

The spring came and we got some news that the Russians were not far from us. We went through villages, where the people got us pieces of bread and many of them told 'Don't give up, just a little time and the war would be over!' We didn't work already, they squeezed us in a former labor camp where were terrible conditions. After a short time we went forward, and once we heard that we had the Russians at ours heels. Then we had to flee. We fled from the Russians, the SS soldiers drove us. We went on foot. We slept where we could, in bushes and under trees. If we got food it was alright, if we didn't get... There were estates, where they let us in and gave us a hot meal. There were humane people too, although the Polish are blessed bad people, in my opinion at least. They let us in to the yard, usually in the barn. I got some dried and cut beet. They used to cultivate beet on that territory. The Polish people like very much the sugar-beet and the cattle-turnip as well, they use to cube and dry it. And I found a such kind of nest in a corner. It was so delicious! It was crunchy and sweet.

They drove us like the cattle. That was a dread. They shot those who couldn't walk, who fell behind. Nobody wanted to remain in the last row, everybody made an effort to advance, so we pursued ourselves to remain alive. For example they shot Szidi near a kilometer stone, when she sat down to fasten her shoestrings... We couldn't fall behind. There were some Polish people from the other relocation camps from Stutthof for example, or from other places, who joined us, and certainly they spoke the Polish language. And they fled away. I don't know what happened with them. The SS soldiers found out this, because they counted us every morning and evening. And in the evening a few people were missing. The SS soldiers told us, that they will shoot ten people for every runaway. Finally they didn't shoot ten people, just the weaker ones. The SS soldier went between the rows, he looked in everybody's eyes, and you couldn't know if you would be the next or somebody else. They selected mostly the old people, and they shot them in the back on the spot. There, in front of us... The group became smaller and smaller, we remained approximately two hundred people...There was a guard for every ten row, and our group (the six women from the same village) was there also. One of us, Manci, was killed. Two of us carried her, arm-in arm. And when I couldn't carry her because I was exhausted, the guard came and told us 'Leave her!' And the gun was in his hand... and Manci's sibling was there too... It was terrible. We, the other five women, came home. Five of us survived.

Liberation at Gdansk Internment Camp

We reached Danzig [Gdansk]. There was a big relocation camp also, and they squeezed us there. I got typhoid fever there. I think we were 80-90 in a barrack, and almost everybody was sick. I

remember my dream. I dreamed, that I'm in a hospital, and there are doctors round me and they cure me. Once somebody ran in, and told us that the German guards go away and before that they will blow up the camp. So my dream hospital disappeared. I was in very bad shape already. I went on all fours to the door of the barrack, at the precise moment when the carpet-bombing took place, when Danzig was bombed. It was daylight in the night. I said that there is no way out from here. I went back and in we slept in that noise made by guns, machine-guns, bombings. We slept for a long time. Once somebody woke up and it was deathlike stillness. The Germans fled away. They didn't blow up the camp. And 2-3 days later the Russians came in. I don't know what day was. We found out later that we were liberated on the same day with the town, with Danzig. This happened on 26th of March [1945].

We could hardly crawl, they took us on stretchers to Danzig, to the hospital. They examined everybodyseparetely. We got blood transfusion – I had Russian blood in my veins... So they were very, very nice and humane. Everybody got dietary regimen. They prescribed 10-15 kinds of 'pierve stol' [first category] and 'dva stol' [second category] diets. There was first, second and third category of diet. Where the Americans liberated the people, they stuffed them with food and many of them died. But in Dazig we remained alive. Everybody had his/her diet. The doctor examined us, and when he saw me, he began to cry. 'What they did with you, my children' this used to be his say. We were nothing but skin and bone. We had no even a decagram of fat, nothing. And naturally, we got the adequate dietary regimen. They brought the food, and they wrote on the platter that 'pierve, dva, tri' three different regimens. This means first, second and third in Russian... You got one kind of diet, your neighbor other kind of diet. They told us not to keep changing the foods. 'It is your interest to eat it.' And I was in so many hospitals! In three? No, I was in four hospitals. I liked the diet very much. Everything what I could chew, every food was very good. I got the 'pierve' [second category] of diet. We had to eat pulpy foods, I could say baby foods. And we got a lot of liquid because we were dehydrated, but everything was delicious. They gave us such kind of foods... but we ate them, because we knew that were beneficial for us. First when I stood up to go to the toilet, I had to pass through a glassy door. I looked into the door pane, and I looked back, because I thought that somebody stood behind me. I didn't recognize myself. That was the first time when I looked into a mirror since I was taken away from my husband's native village. I had 23 kilograms at age 21. I had 48 kilograms when they took me away. A lot of people were liberated by the Americans. And the Americans, I don't know in which camp, stuffed the men with chocolate and candies. Many of them died, because they couldn't assimilate those. In our hospital nobody died. There was woman, whose foot became frozen, because when we fled from the Russians we walked almost naked in the snow. They amputated her foot, she had just heel. The third girl, called Irenke was who lost her foot, she had only heel. Poor Irenke learned to walk so, she came home on her heel. She found some relative and she emigrated to Israel. I don't know anything about her

Once happened a very affecting event. My camp sibling - I used to call her camp sibling – who was my mate in the camp and we came home together lives in Brasso. Her name is Edit Schumeg, and she is religious, she uses to light candles. I don't know from where we found out that we had a Jewish holiday. I think that was New Year's Day (Rosh Hashanah). And she lit a candle on the bedside table. We were in the Russian hospital already. And the woman doctor 'the knotted' entered the room. She was big, tall, red-haired woman with a big knot. That's why we called her 'the knotted'. She asked us: 'Why you lit candle?' We answered that we had holiday. She look upon

us: ‘Then I had holiday too.’ It turned out that she was a Jew. She was high-rank officer and doctor also. She visited us every day. She picked on me, she tried to tempt me not to come home, because I wouldn’t find anybody there – and she was right – and to go with her. She wanted to adopt me, and enter to the university, because I told her that I graduated only the high-school... She asked me almost every day: Have you change your mind? I still hoped that somebody from the family will come home. Oh no! I didn’t want to go to Russia...

It was a large ward, we were approximately 20 people there, and two Ukrainian women lay in the last two beds, in the corner. They used to scold us. One of them was called Nina, but I don’t remember exactly, I know only that she was a very ugly woman. She named us ‘zigauner bande’ [gypsy band]. The two women were Ukrainians, not Russians, but they were taken up, they got other kind of food, so they were treated exceptionally. And they were very angry with us, because we spoke in Hungarian, and they didn’t understand that. And we were angry with her, because she quarelled with us all the time, not to speak in Hungarian. We began to understand Russian, but we didn’t speak the language. We spoke a good German because we got used to. She scolded us in Russian and in German also. They told that they were prisoners. It was a very big fuss, I don’t know who were they and I should never find out, because they didn’t use to talk with us. But the doctors showed favor toward them, they got perfusion and many other things. We said that they are the uncommon patients. Then the Russians interrogated us [and they also]. I represented our group, so they interrogated me. They interrogated Nina for a very long time, for many hours. We noticed that she didn’t come back to her bed, although she could walk already. And on the next day Edit came and shouted ‘Come quickly, and see how Nina and the other woman... A carriage came, there were two Russian soldiers in the front and two in the back. They seated Nina and the other woman in the carriage. It turned out, that they spied for the Germans. And they were so loud-mouthed. And they pestered us all the time. They were taken away by the Russians, and I think that those, who showed favor toward them, bit their nails. Why we didn’t find out this before?

The first hospital [where I was], was a barrack hospital. They transformed one barrack into hospital, because we were so many, that we couldn’t get in to the regular hospital. We were there quite for a long time, and later they took us to Torun, with huge ambulances. I lay, so I could see just walls, because there weren't any undamaged houses. They took us over to a large hospital, which had five floors There were a lot of people who had tuberculosis, but they were cured. They were really nice people. We were together with the Russians. We were on the second floor. I had terrible stiffness when I had to go up to the second floor... there was our department. We spent those six months mostly in bed. Everybody was sick. We were aching all over. It was terrible when we went down for a walk. There were Russians in the hospital also, their department was on the first floor. We were on the second floor, and the German soldiers above us... they were SS soldiers. The Russian cured the sick German soldiers too. When I was feeling better, I told Edit to come with me, and talk with the German soldiers. We entered to one of them. We found a half-dead man where we entered. I rebuked him very badly. I was glad that I found a German soldier, on who I could wreak my vengeance – I spoke a good German then. We used to speak Hungarian only between each other. He said that he didn’t anything wrong. That he didn’t anything wrong! Everybody could say that. I have to tell you sincerely that he Russians were very humane. They were really careful and very nice, they had time for everybody, because everyone had his/her healthy problem. For example they examined my lungs monthly because I was weak, and they didn’t let me home until I didn’t recover entirely. That’s why I spent six months in the hospital. After we were liberated, I

spent six months in hospital, in Poland. They didn’t let me home.

When I was feeling better, we used to sit on a stone with Edit, and we chatted. Once a young man came to us – he was around 20-21 – and it tourned out, that he is a Hungarian soldier from the German army. He was shot, his arm was incorporated in plaster, and he was extremely glad that he could spoke Hungarian at last. We met several times. I was very shocked, that as a German soldier, he was treated ‘especially’ and he showed us that the worms came out from under the plaster The doctors told him that those worms cured the wound...! God forbid...

Auschwitz, Riga, Stuthoff and Danzig – these were the four big places where I was. Not to mention the labor camps. I spent one year in the camps and half a year in the hospital. I came home after one and a half year. I was away for one and a half year...

Five women came home from our group, but I'm the one alive. And there is Edit, who lives in Brasso. She recovered much sooner than me, but we said that we are sisters. 'The knotted one' understood that we are siblings, and she asked us 'Why you have different names?' We answered that I adopted my husband’s name and Edit kept her maiden name. We lied. She didn't want to come home without me. And we came home together. I’m keeping in touch with her since. We talk on the phone every month, sometimes I’m calling her, on other occasions she does. In the past we used to visit each other, but she’s not young anymore, although she is younger than me with four or five years... I only know about her, nobody else. The one who had her foot amputated, emigrated to Israel. I know one more person, who emigrated to Israel. I don’t know anything about the other ones. I gave my address in the village, but then I divorced and disappeared in the country. So even if they wrote me, there was nobody to forward my letters to me. I wondered so many times about what happened with them...

There was a young Russian officer who began courting very intensely. Probably by then, after six months in hospital, I started to have a more human look. He asked me how many we were, and how we were, and whether I knew our names. I told him, of course. I even wrote down all the names, and he told me he would give me a ticket. I told him to get me three, to Czechoslovakia. So we were three who came home to Romania. Irenke, Edit and myself. He made us the tickets and asked me, whether I didn’t change my mind and would go with them to Russia. I told him I wouldn’t. So we got this ‘passport’, because we were told it was accepted everywhere, and advised us that if we would not get any seats on the train, we should go to the patrol. This was the soldier who was on duty, that is who was watching the order at the station, and was wearing a red armband with the letter P on it. An he was supposed to make place for us. It was so awkward [the situation]. In Poland each car had a separate door, not like those we have here, with a hallway. The door was on the outside, like the ones you can see in the old movies. He opened the door and told us in Russian: 'Everybody out!’ There were six seats inside. So we sat down. And we had to go to the patrol several times because we had no seats. One time we didn’t go to him, because we were very ashamed, although we had nothing to be ashamed of, so we traveled on the bumper. At a certain station, we probably looked funny, almost bald, it was obvious we have been deported... Anyway, the town was full of deportees. A lady came to me and gave me a bunch of grapes. In Poland, in Torun or I don’t know where. And I told her I don’t know Polish, but I asked her whether she could speak German. Yes. So I thanked her very much, but I couldn’t eat grapes on an empty stomach. I fell asleep there, while hanging o to the handrail of the bumper, and I felt like it was morning. Then I told her: ‘thank you very much, but I can’t...’ Suddenly I was behaving as a lady.

But then I accepted it, I guess. There were many people coming there and giving us food. There were occasions when we asked when our train was leaving, then we sat and slept in the waiting room. There is a long way home from Danzig, several thousand kilometers. And we came, and came, and came...

First we went to Budapest. There we had to go to the Russian army base and they made out a single paper for the three of us, because we traveled to Nagyvarad together. They told us that if we had any problems we should go to the Russian soldier on duty and ask for help. Well, this was all nice, but we needed one who could speak some Slavic language, because the Polish people, for example, were able to communicate with the Russians, but we could not. In the end two women from Kassa joined us, they were Jewish too, one of the was called Helenke, and then they were able to help us free one car. We came together until Kassa. There also were two women from the Czech Republic, Eszti and Sara. But they didn't come with us to Budapest.

We got on a bus and the check-man came to sell us tickets. We told them we had no money. 'What do you mean you have no mone?' We told him we were coming home from the deportation. 'And how was I supposed to know that?' We got some Russian documents which included our names, but he told us he is not able to read it. Then one of the women told him: 'Look at them and you'll see. Just look at them.' (The Russians cut our hair, because we were nitty.) And [the controller] went on. He wasn't too pushy. The woman was very nice, and we thanked her, and she even gaves us some food, we suffered the pangs of hunger. There, in the tram she explained us where to go, because she knew where we can get some aid from. We reported there with the Russian document, and got fifteen hundred pengos. There, in Budapest, we were told at the station which school we had to go to. This was before September 15th, before the school year began. We were accommodated in a school. They gave us someblankets and we slept on the floor, but we were used to that, we had no problem with that. They gathered us there. I you had any relatives, you were allowed to go and sleep there and the next day you could return. We got some food. The Association of Jewish Deportees helped us, so we became human again. With the fifteen hundred pengos we were able to buy ourselves food, soap, toothpaste and toothbrush. This was the first thing we did. So we brushed our teeth... At the hospital the Russians gave us some 'stony soap', which didn't lather or rub, so we were quite dirty, we used soil. And all that dirt soaked in our skin. In Budapest we wanted to go to the Nagyatadi Szabo Street, my husband's elder sister, aunt and grandparents lived there. I looked for the Nagyatadi Szabo Street, but I wasn't able to find it. I am a person who asks many questions, and I asked everyone where should I go and at a certain point a young man came, I was leaning against the wall, and asked him: 'Can you please tell me where can I find Nagyatadi Szabo Street?' He looked at me, then over my head, looked at me again and walked away. He thought I was crazy. I asked myself I was insane or he was? So I looked up and I saw the plate for the Nagyatadi Szabo Street.

So I slept at my relatives. I was very happy. The first thing I did was to take a bath, I haven't had a bath in a bath-tub for one and a half year. And they weren't able to get me out of there: 'come out now, are you still alive?' they were shouting. I didn't take a bath for one and a half years... it was no use to wash up in cold water... anyway, enough of that. I managed to brush my teeth and they gave me fresh underwear, but the clothes didn't fit me so I had to wear the ones I got from the Russians. When we left the hospital we received skirts, a blouse, a jacket, a handkerchief, some stockings and other things. My relatives already knew my husband was at home. They gave me

something to eat right away, and while I was there in Budapest I was together with my two former inmates. They were so happy they were chearing that they could eat so many delicacies without paying for them from those 1500 pengos. Edit was unable to find her relatives. We spent there three days, and then we went to the railway station. The relatives gave us money, they were really nice, and we managed to get on the train and each of us went her way.

To be completely honest, when I came home I told everyone I'm the fearcest anti-Semite in Nagyvarad. Because the Jewish foremen hurt us more than the SS. And they did it only to impress the Germans. And they had a very easy life. How is that possible that your own people would do you wrong? We had to stand in line for meal. Ant there were some very resourceful young girls who did it twice. The cook came out, who was a Jew, too: you already got some, and she took me out of the line, as well, among others, and I was left without food until the evening, because they didn't give me lunch, neither. And then I started crying. I wasn't hurt because I was hungry, but because of the unfairness. There was no counting in the labor camp. Bu they [in the concentration camp] counted us. An they made us stay out there in the heat and rain. So... but all credit to the exceptions.

Returning Home

I went home to Alsoszopor, to my husband. He remained there, he wasn't deported. He was in Budapest all the time, free. He had some relatives there: His grandmother, grandfather and aunt. His mother was originally from Budapest. My husband managed to escape from the labor camp in Nagybanya and lived in Budapest until the end of the war. He hid there. He was smart and managed to give out himself as Hungarian. He wore Burger boots. That was in vogue than, it had long legs, had a yellowish-brownish, leather-like color and had laces. These were the so-called Burger boots, it is most certainly of German origins. He considered himself a Hungarian patriot. And not everyone could afford themselves to wear Burger boots. This could also be a symbol of nobility. He used to walk around Budapest and he didn't look like a Jew, and probably this is why he was never asked to show his papers, otherwise it would have been al over for him. And when the war was over and Transylvania was reattached to Romania, he came home from Budapest. The rest of his family didn't come home. He was the only one, and one of his cousins, Laci, Miksa's son. Laci came home, and then emigrated to America. I don't know where he lives, if he is alive. My husband took over the management of the estate and of the mill, and he made loads of money.

When I came home, in 1946, I went to Nagyvarad, but there was nobody home. There were people living in our apartment, some strangers have been moved there. There were people moved in every house and apartment, I don't know who moved them in. The house was there... empty. I couldn't find anything. There were no pieces of furniture, only the chandeliers. I still remember that out in the yard our white sideboard, the Russians took everything else away. They emptied the house. None of our pieces of furniture were left there. They made a law that if they found any locked, uninhabited house, they broke in and everything [they could find] was taken to a warehouse. I don't know when this happened, because I wasn't there, the neighbors related me this. Those who came home could go to the warehouse and could pick out the things they said it was theirs. By the time I arrived home, the warehouse was empty. Well, it was easy to say that something belonged to you, a piano or something... There was a Steinfeld piano, the furniture for four rooms, in a word they took away everything. First the Russians, than anyone who were interested could take from the warehouse whatever they wished to. Pots, everything, everything.

This was already after the end of the war, and my husband was managing the farm and the mill, and made lots of money, he became quite rich. ‘He lived like fighting cocks’ and he was so strange, so unfamiliar. Well, one and a half years have passed, and I probably changed, too, but I’m sure he changed, as well. And he told me to have patience, because he is still young and needs to live the moment. He was two years older then me. My ex-husband was away quite a lot, his job required it, but he mostly didn’t take me to the entertainment events and balls. And the truth is that in time I found out he only cheated me with two women: anyone and everyone... And I was there alone in that big house, and in order to be able to defend myself, he gave me a gun. A pistol trimmed with pearls. And I shot myself. I tried to kill myself, because I thought I couldn’t live with this man, and I have nowhere to go so I didn’t want to live anymore. I related this one month ago to my daughter, she didn’t even know that. Although I had no financial difficulties, I told myself I couldn’t take it anymore. The bullet missed my heart by half a centimeter. I was taken to Szatmar and I got well. But then I decided it was all that I could take... So I didn’t wait for him to settle down. This was the reason why we divorced.

My ‘dear’ husband wasn’t willing to give me what I was entitled to... He was fond of me in his own way, but I wasn’t willing to live with him anymore. After some hard time he gave me back my clothes, but he refused to give me my things, like the photos left in the apartment the neighbors gave back to him. I was quite desperate. First because none of my relatives came home, my brother, my father or my mother, nobody. My two cousins, who were studying in Nagyvarad, chose to leave Romania. I had nobody left here. So the only one I had beside me was my husband. As I walked on the streets of Nagyvarad I met former classmates, acquaintances, but no relatives. One of the neighbors, a ‘nice’ one, told me: ‘No wonder they told us the Germans treated you well, because you’re looking quite chubby!’ What was I supposed to answer to something like that...? So I didn’t. I had nothing. No money at all. I only had the shirt I was wearing. I thought myself I had to do something, because I had to make a living and I had to live somewhere. My lady-friend allowed me to live at her place, but I couldn’t stay there for the rest of my life. I sold the house. But first I had to arrange for my poor mother and brother to be declared deceased, because the house was registered to my mother’s name, and I had to prove I was the only heiress. My lawyer was such a swindler, he twisted and turned everything so that I was left with nothing. He made me sign all kinds of documents, sold the house and in the end I only received half of the amount we established. The house was bought by a salon keeper. I went to him and he told me to wait, because I would get the money. I never did.

When I had a little money, I rented a room, a small apartment, I wasn’t willing to take advantega of my lady-friend. It had a small vestibule, a washbasin alcove and a toilet. It was just what I needed. In the meantime I learnt stenography and typing from a teacher called Rado, because I wasn’t feeling strong enough to go to university. I thought I wasn’t a complete person. My daughter said: ‘Mom, you managed to survive in a camp, you lived to see the liberation, came home from Poland almost on your own, with two of your friends, and you were afraid to go on your own?’ No.

Remarriage and Children

After I moved to Nagyvarad I met on the Main Street Andras Gaspar, Andris. He fell on my neck, since we were friends and lived opposite to each other. During the Holocaust he was a forced laborer in Poland. To be honest, we didn’t really talked about this subject. Some time ago I wasn’t able to talk about this, I didn’t even tell anything to my children. He was a real sportsman, he

played tennis and was a swimmer. But when he came back, he was nothing but skin and bones. In the last weeks-months of detention they were all thrown in a relocation camp. He was amongst the first to come home to Nagyvarad. His elder brother has not been deported, because he, for the sake of his wife, converted to Christianism and he wasn't taken away because he wore the white armband. [Editor's note: The white armband was worn by the Christians of Jewish origins, that is the ones who converted, and whom, according to the anti-Jewish laws in force were considered Jews. They have been deported to forced labor units for Christians. Ses also: forced labor.] Andris was a late-born, his mother was 43 when she gave birth to him. He had an elder sister, who was 16 years older than him, and she didn't come home, neither. And none of his relatives, especially his mother. His father was a lawyer, but he died of heart-attack when Andris was in twelveth grade of high school, and he left them nothing. By then his bother was already working and he had to help out his mother, while Andris had to sustain himself: he gave lessons to the weaker students for money.

When we met he was already working at a mining company, he was the manager at a clay and kaolin mine in Rev [Bihar county]. He was hired as manager although he only had a high school graduation diploma. And from then on he came to Nagyvarad every Saturday-Sunday. Andris was glad too to have someone he could talk about the things [before the war]. We were getting along very well and on Saturday nights we used to go to the Astoria, which was in vogue then. Otherwise the Astoria was owned by my lady friend's father. My lady-friend used to come along, she was already married. And he told me joking that, and I'll never forget this: 'We should get married!' I asked her: 'Are you nuts?' I respected Andris very much, but love or something like that it was out of the question... Then he wrote a statement, it got lost once we moved: 'In full possession of my faculties I sign that I will take Anni as my wife.' The whole thing was a joke. I gave it a thought, because I went through a marriage once and was a love match.

And then we got married in 1948. We only had civil marriage. I didn't divorce according to the Jewish prescriptions, because we went to the Jewish community and they advised us not to, because it is a long procedure and we couldn't afford it. I got my civil divorce, I still have the decision. So my second marriage was only a civil one, with two witnesses, and after that we and our friends, former classmates went to a restaurant. I even remember that we couldn't order too much because we had no money, and I found a fishbone in my potato soup. This happened in Nagyvarad's most elite restaurant, the Transilvania. And it turned out to be such a wonderful marriage you could rarely find, to be honest. We had no arguments or any misunderstandings for 48 years.

From the little money I have left I bought some furniture I'm still using, but we had nothing. We were so poor that the first thing I did was to have him made six pairs of pants. He was employed, he had a salary, and we never had financial problems. We always discussed what we could afford from it and we bought those things. Since my husband was working in Rev, we moved there, in the village. We lived there for about one year, then the whole office was moved to Bratka, come thirty kilometers from Rev in the direction of Kolozsvar. [Editor's note: to be more precise, the distance between Rev and Bratka is 15 km.] We were given an official quarters so we had no such problems.

In the meantime my grandfather's estate was nationalized. Recently I got something back from it, but nothing then. My youngest uncle has not been deported. He and his family lived in Arad, and the Jews from the countryside were all moved in the town, but the Romanians have not deported

the Jews. So he managed to survive. He managed the estate. I visited him in Arad, in the apartment, and it was so weird when I saw it was full of huge crates. In 1948 he, his wife and their little girl fled from the country. Later he wrote me a letter from Hungary, describing me everything there was there [on the estate], with all the wheat, rye, animals, and that was all mine... But I tore it up because Andris told me that if I went there, they would have locked me up as a kulak. So I never set a foot there. But I could never forgive my poor uncle that even though he knew very well the situation I was in, I only had two pillows I bought from the flea-market, because I couldn't buy them anywhere else, he didn't make us a package to ease my condition. He never sent me anything before, because he probably was afraid someone would find out they were planning to flee. Because if someone found out, he would have been locked up that instance. Then they emigrated from Hungary to Israel in 1948, and they remained there. My uncle died there, so did my aunt and my poor cousin, who died of lung cancer. He was the youngest so it hurt me the most, because I liked Marta very much.

In 1950 my daughter Veronika Gaspar was born. I gave birth to her in Nagyvarad, when I was 27. Andris was 28. We moved to Borsabanya. This is a small country town in tip of Maramaros. We felt quite well there, it was a beautiful scenery. I, as wife, I moved like a snail, with the house. We never asked ourselves the question whether I should go with him or not. We went together. There they gave us a one-room flat with all mod cons. This meant the bedroom, the children's room, the bathroom and the kitchen were all in the same room. I wasn't cooking because I didn't want to have smell of food in the room, so we subscribed at the canteen. I never ate so much bacn than in that period. If I was kosher, I would have never eaten it! My husband didn't observe the Jewish traditions, nor did his parents. After the war we had no problems because we were Jews. We never felt we were considered different [by the non-Jews]. I have been among Hungarians and Romanians, but we never faced such problems. Wherever we went, our neighbors, and everyone knew who and what we were, because they could find out from the office. But we never had any conflicts with anyone. We always were on good terms with people.

We lived in Borsabanya for about eight months, and then we received the notification from Bucharest that we had to move on, they never asked us whether we wanted to or not. Andris loved to get the works going. We moved to Borpatak, ten kilometers from Nagybanya, and that was a beautiful village, as well. There was a gold-mine there. We lived in the castle of the former owner of the mine, a Hungarian man called Pokol. (He flee abroad during the war, and never came back.) Allegedly on top of that building, up on the tower, there was a golden globe, made of massive gold. Nobody took that off. A relative of this Pokol once invited us to dinner [he related us these things]. Pokol was a very wealthy man, he owned the gold-mine, he built it, based on his own designs. He had a daughter called Rita, who had lung disease. Her profile was cut in the French doors of Mrs. Pokol's rooms. There were around ten families living in the castle. Each of them got one or two rooms, depending on the fact that the employee was alone or with the family. Everyone had a bathroom, kitchen, closet, everything they wanted. We liked it very much there. It was beautiful, a nice little apartment. If it was rearranged after Pokol went away, that is whether it was the same when he lived there, with this many kitchens, I don't know. In front of the castle it was a beautiful garden. We didn't live there too much, only one winter and one spring. We stayed there less then a year, and our daughter [Veronika] got sick. So I had to go to Nagybanya , and there was no vehicle, except a cab, a drag Mr. Pokol used to travel around. The coachman was called Vasile, and it was the only means of going to Nagybanya. There was no coach service between Borpatak and

Nagybanya, there was no railway there, either, and I thought if something happened to Vasile I wouldn't be able to go there. You never know what can happen to a small child, can you? It took us two hours to get to Nagybanya by carriage. The doctor [in Nagybanya] gave us the wrong medicine [for the treatment].

One time Andris came home, and told me: 'What do you think: should I enter the university in Kolozsvar?' I said yes. He graduated with the highest grades. When my sister-in-law heard about this: 'What?! He has a good pay! Why does he need a university degree? He has a decent job without university. You'll be so poor as a church mouse. It's expensive.' – Then I told her: 'I will be the poor one, and Andris, not you.' He signed up for the correspondence courses of the mining faculty. But he received a notification from the center in Bucharest that stated that mining could not be studied through correspondence anymore, and he had to choose something else, and they were willing to enter him to any other department, he wouldn't have to take the admittance exams one more time. So now there was that big question mark, what faculty should he enter? I didn't interfere in his option, he decided to enter the department of mechanical engineering, and he was transferred to Bucharest. He went to Bucharest, signed up and came back. Well, Bucharest was very far away from Nagybanya. And what happened then? Some people came from Bucharest, from the Ministry, to check how things were going, and they had lunch at our place, because there was no restaurant there. One of them asked us how is life there, and I told them I would go in my knees anywhere we could have medical assistance, because of the child. 'Where do you want to go?' I don't care, but anywhere we could find medical assistance. [One of them] promised me he would arrange for us to be transferred. I didn't really believed him, but in the end he did, and not just anywhere, to Gyulafehervar. So we ended up in Gyulafehervar. We stayed there for six years, until Andris graduated from university. We had no holidays, Andris had no vacation for six years, because he took his holiday during the examination period, because back then there was no vacation for studies. Anyway, those were hard times. But the professors were very nice. He sent them the works and they sent them back to him corrected. And he had to take the exams once a year. If he had to retake any exams in the fall, he had to take them once again.

In Gyulafehervar there was a well-known Jewish lady doctor, everyone told us we should go to her. She found out that my daughter's organism couldn't assimilate anything. She ate her meal, but we found it unaltered in the chamber pot. Her name was Iren Salamon. I went to her and told her my problem. She began treating my child, and I have to thank her for my daughter's life. She told me that if we stayed some more in Borpatak, my daughter would have been most certainly dead. I would have probably found her one morning asleep, because of the weakness. If there was anything, she [my daughter] got measles, then mumps, and all kinds of diseases, she got on her bike and came to us immediately. As soon as I called her on thye phone, she came there at once. Very quick, very quick. She was a spinster who graduated Sorbonne. She wasn't deported. [Editor's note: Gyulafehervar remained under Romanian authority during World War II.] She lived in her own house, in a private house [together with her parents]. It was a big house, but I was only in the consulting room, the bathroom and the waiting room. They weren't poor, after all she graduated Sorbonne. You had to have money to pay for it. She was atleast twenty years older than me. One time, when we turned onto the street where she lived, my daughter began screaming because she knew she would get n injection. She called he inside, into the consulting room, leaving me outside. I only found out later why. 'Let's fool mummy. We'll tell them you didn't get an injection today. Don't cry, don't say anything, we'll fool mummy.' And I was expecting my daughter to scream even

louder. But it was a dead silence. ‘We fooled mummy’ – they said with one voice. And from that day she found out the injection wasn’t painful. And from that moment on she never screamed again. So she was an incredibly intelligent, cultivated lady. My daughter was quite big when I heard Iren Salamon was going to get married. My daughter heard that, because while she was out playing she heard this: ‘What do you mean? But the lady is old! How come she’s getting married?’ And she moved to Kolozsvar, to her husband. Her husband was Jewish, as well. She [the lady doctor] died here in Kolozsvar. She was very nice, incredibly nice. Each year, on New Year’s Eve we used to send her a greeting card, and one time we received a letter in which she wrote we were her only patients who remembered her. She was very excited by this. And asked us hat did she do to deserve this? And we answered that nothing more than our child’s wife. She was an incredibly nice lady. Later I visited her in Kolozsvar, she was living opposite to the New York hotel, on the second floor, in an old house that had an elevator. My daughter was four or five years old, and she has never seen an elevator before, but we prepared her. I knew she was living upstairs, so her father told her: ‘You get in the closet, push a button and it takes you up.’ ‘And if I get in any closet and push a button?’ ‘You can do that, but it will take you nowhere.’ She wanted to go up and down [with the elevator].

Then we received the transfer notification to Stej, ‘Orasul Petru Groza’ [Petru Groza Town in Romanian, in Bihar county], some 50-60 km from Belenyes, in the direction of Biharfured. [Editor’s note: It is in fact 16 km away from Belenyes.] This small town was built by the Russians, because they found uranium and built a uranium mine. Andris was appointed shop-floor leader. He wasn’t an engineer yet, he did not have his diploma yet. The Ministry had a department. A huge building was built, it was like a smaller ministry. I don’t know why, but Andris had to go there. And this all was built by the Russians. They even measured the air in front of the department, and the gauge was clicking stating ‘poluat’ [polluted]. The army was responsible for the uranium. This was a military secret. Andris was a civilian, he was an engineer, and he worked there in the shop-floor. But the army was supervising everything. It was order, order, and again order. There was no stealing there. The uranium was transported away by the Russians. They processed it. Here it was just extracted. Once a car tipped over while transporting uranium. It was transported several kilometers through the field from the mine, and it turned over. The land in an area of one kilometer was removed, and not only what the truck was transporting. The uranium was a military secret, so we were transferred to the M.A.I. [Ministerul Armatei Industriale, Ministry of Defense Industry], the army. This is a very hazardous material, but weren’t aware of that. At least I didn’t. It is possible that Andris knew the M.A.I. was looking for trustworthy people, offering them a very good salary, and we finally could breath again, because it wasn’t that easy to go to Bucharest all the time with a child. So they lured us there. There was a lido, and everything. And there was a large market, where the village people used to come, because there was a very good life there. There was meat, and what else did we need after that starvation?

I was a housewife, and took care of the children. My daughter started school in Stej, and finished two grades of elementary school there. She studied in Romanian. Andris wanted badly to have another child. I told him: ‘If you can get me a mother-in-law or a mother, or an aunt, grandmother, then we will have another child.’ I was working: knitting, sewing, everything that had something to do with needlework. I worked for the neighbors and everyone. I had so much work I was almost unable to keep up. I started knitting, sewing in Gyulafehervar. I couldn’t take a job because although there were opportunities, but what about the child? Back then there were no daycare

centers. So I made money as I could.

In Stej there were those flat blocks with four apartments. Two of them on the ground floor, two upstairs. And between the blocks there were green belts. And there were these ‘VB’s, the Russians called them this way, small green houses, small villa-like houses for one family. I just watched those beautiful houses, made of wood, but Andris wasn’t watched those beautiful houses, made of wood, but Andris didn’t want to move in such a house. So there was a little block, then a ‘vb’ and a little block again. And lots of green belts. It was a beautiful way of building. It was a beautiful little place. When we arrived in Stej there were still many Russians living there. My neighbor, for example, living in the same block, was a Russian family. An engineer working there and his family, just like ours, and another family, the Sugars. The lady, Elza, was Saxon, while Laci was Jewish. She saved her husband. He wasn’t deported from Kolozsvar. This was the chief accountant, they lived on the first floor. And there were the Calianus, originally from Temesvar. We called the lady ‘Kajla neni’ [auntie Droopy], my daughter gave her that name. To sum up, only the very best were brought to Stej from the different companies. Because it was a very lucrative company. So in that block there was a Russian family and three local families: a chief accountant, an engineer and us.

One day the Russian’s little girl came to our kitchen window, saying ‘malinki koshka’. I asked her: ‘What are you saying?’ And she kept saying ‘malinki koshka’. I had absolutely no clue what that meant. It turned out we put some crates outside, because we just moved in there, and a cat had kittens in one of the crates. Malinki means small and koshka means cat. They used to come to us and we threw about our arms trying to explain them if we needed something, and they gave us anything we needed. It was a young couple, the little girl was around six or seven. Later they went back to Russia. The Russians had their separate store, and we were not allowed to shop there. But they were allowed to shop anywhere. We had money too, we could loosen up a little.

It was forbidden to go even in the area of the mine! On one evening Andris didn’t come home because some misfortune happened in the shop-floor and asked me to bring him some sandwiches, if I could, because he hadn’t eaten since morning and he wasn’t able to come home. It was the first time I went there. He explained me, though, where I should go, because there was an asphalt road leading there and it was already dark. Well, a soldier jumped ahead of me every minute! They asked me what was I doing there. Fortunately Andris told me to bring along my pass I could prove my husband was working there. They searched me before I went in. They searched Andris, as well, because they wanted to prevent him bringing out anything. He was searched both when coming out and when going back in. Andris couldn’t bear this atmosphere. People had to submit their Resumes two or three times a year. Because you never know when one’s background changes, right? And Andris hated this very much. And he didn’t like this army life anyway. We only stayed there for two years. So he started sniffing around [looked around]: ‘where can we go?’ They were looking for a man in Govora, Vilcea county. So he requested a transfer, and what a fuss they made of it. He just wanted to get out of that army life. I believe if we wanted to we could stay for there even until now, but we chose to go to Rimnicu Vilcea.

So he moved to Rimnicu Vilcea, in the first [true] block of flats of my life. It was an L-shaped building with three staircases. In each staircase there were twenty families. So al in all we were living sixty in the block. In the center there was a small yard, garden, and we made some benches. We lived there for more than ten years, my daughter graduated from high-school there, in the ‘Liceul Balcescu’ [Balcescu High-school]. She didn’t manage to enter the university first try, only

the second try. So she got a job as secretary. So she worked, because everyone of us had to do something. I continued to sew, the needlework, and didn't get a job. I wasn't able to, because Andris was changing jobs all the time, and it would have been a problem for me to change them as he did. By then he already had his engineer diploma, that is he became chief engineer. He started off the construction. There was a beautiful factory there in Vilcea, I was there several times. The alleys between the different departments were asphalted, but they were always covered with mud. So Andris punished them for all that mud until they removed it. So he was a very good organizer, an extremely good one. I believe he was a better organizer than engineer. He was a good engineer, but his organizing skills were outstanding. Then he started up the soda-works in Govora. There was an alkali factory that needed to be started up. He wasn't willing to leave until it wasn't started up, and then soda was a very well-selling products, but now I heard it has fallen back very much. Andris worked there, each morning a bus took them to Govora, which is around 20 kilometers from Vilcea. We were living in Vilcea. Because why would I stay in a village when my daughter was a student. They started telling him what wage they would give him. Andris told the people from Govora to give that up because they couldn't afford to pay him the salary he was getting in Stej. He didn't leave there because he wanted a better salary, but because he wanted to get out of the army.

People were very nice in Rimnicu Vilcea, but very uncivilized. They were the first generation in shoes, because until then they wore laced-up sandals. There was one Hungarian family and us, the Jews… The rest were Romanians. These were my 'oltean's [Oltenians – people from the region of Oltenia]. They were very bad at broiling. And they couldn't cook, neither. They were sticking pigs, but they only used the meat and only made bacon. They didn't know how to butcher the pig, they only cut up the plucks, the liver, the kidneys… You know how expertly a Transylvanian butcher butchers the pig, don't' you? For them, everything inside the pig was 'spurcat'… spit. It had to be thrown away. They came to me, for example, asking how could I make Hamburgers so it had such a good smell. So I told them I mince the meat. Then they asked what's a meat-grinder? A mincer. They had no idea what a mincer was. Then I asked them how they were making the Hamburgers. They told me they used to boil the meat and then cut it with a knife. This was Hamburgers for them. Another occasion was when they smelled cake. They said Easter was coming and they didn't know how to cook. So I taught them how to cook cake [pastry]. They were very strict about taking off the shoes in the vestibule when entering the house. They were very particular about that. Not otherwise, but overparticular about this. The neighbor came over and I asked him not to take his shoes off. Well, how on earth… – he wanted to look at the painting we had in the room. Well, I wasn't able to air my room… that smell it was terrible. The other one asked me how could she convince her husband to change his socks? They were coming to me with all kind of problems, because they knew I always gavethem good advice. Evn with issues related to their kids.

There were no other Jews in the block. They didn't know what a Jew was. They just didn't know; there was no anti-Semitism there. Once some neighbors came asking me why I was looking over the fence at the entrance of the block. |On the other side of the fence there were some small houses. They told me there are some very weird people in the back of the yard. So what was I doing there, looking what on the other side of the fence was? In the end it turned out there was a Jewish prayer-house. And it was Friday evening, and the kids heard some singing and they were very amused about that people were nodding and singing in tallit. Then I explained them whom the Jews are, because they had no idea what a Jew, an 'evreu' [Jew in Romanian] was. They didn't even

heard the word ‘jidan’ [the derogatory term for a Jew], it was only used in the Regat, in the area of Bucharest, I suppose. All right then, they said they would forbid their children to go there, because for them it was like a circus performance, a curiosity, which they have never seen before. So they forbid the children to go there, that is to climb up the fence and watch them. Me and my husband never went there [to the prayer house]. To be completely honest, the town was completely unfamiliar for me, totally unfamiliar. I’m not the person to make friends too easy anyway. If I become friends with someone, that’s a different story, but not this way. There was no anti-Seimitism at the soda-works, neither. They never made Andris feel he was a Jew, although I’m sure they knew.

At that time communism was established for quite a while. My husband was a member of the party, and he couldn’t have been chief engineer otherwise. When he came home [after the war] he could have sworn the communist party was the only one which that could protect the Jews. I didn’t see anything in it [in communism]. I just wanted people to live in peace. I couldn’t sympathize with communism because I was brought up otherwise. When someone showed me a communism, I was still a child then: ‘Look, that’s a communist!’ , and I’ll never forget this, I was puzzled: ‘What kind of a disease is communism?’ My grandmother never let me play or make friends with poor children, because she wanted me to maintain a certain level. I told her I didn’t care who their mother or father were, I just liked the kid and I like being friends with them. She really bugged me a lot with this. Because: ‘You should only make friends with the rich ones!’ So I was raised according to opposite mentality. I had no problems during the communist era. I weren’t happy with it, but I kept quiet During the communist era Andris has never used in his favor the fact that he was a chief engineer. He wasn’t willing to ‘get’ even a pin, never…, because to ‘get’ meant to steal. It was very hard when we had to stand that starving, and the humiliation of lacking this and that. We were never able to buy our child what we wanted to. Andris soon realized this was unacceptable and this was shown by the fact that everything was bothering him, the decrees, official reports, which were all false. I suffered quite a lot because of the Ceausescu 5 era. I was feeling humiliated as a human. Well, we had to live under continuous constraints. Then we heard the terrible rumors about our phone being tapped.

My daughter was admitted to the university, and then Andris came home saying he heard something that a chief engineer was needed in Dicsoszentmarton. So we went there. He used to start up everything and then he moved on. The chemical plant in Dicsoszentmarton was built. But I wasn’t willing to move there because there were terrible apartments there. The local mayor told us to contact the local authorities of Marosvasarhely to get an apartment here. [Editor’s note: There are 39 km between the two towns.] And we were able to arrange this, and we got this apartment then, on the first floor, where the children are living now. We were the first dwellers. We moved to Marosvasarhely in 1973. I said I would be carried out of here only with my heels foremost… but I moved away twice [since]… He was coming here twice a week: On Wednesday and on Saturday, otherwise he was living in a hostel. Then he was transferred here to the Prodcomplex [Editor’s note: the plastic and glass factory].

My daughter was attending the university in Bucharest. She was in the last year, and during the Christmas holiday they came home and then she married Doru, her current husband. They had no religious marriage, just a civil one. Nor I, nor Andris had no problem with the fact that her husband was not Jewish, but Romanian. Doru also graduated the university in Bucharest, but we already

knew him from Vilcea, their friendship began there. In Vilcea, in the yard in the back of which there was that prayer house, in that section of the street lived Doru together with his mother and his elder sister. So I know Doru since he was a child. And I know very well my ‘nora’, my daughter’s mother-in-law. She is an incredibly beautiful and smart, she was the most beautiful woman in Vilcea. She was a very beautiful woman. Doru’s father was a Romanian Orthodox priest, he died already. He ran away, went to buy some cigarettes, and never went back. Doru was still a little boy. He managed to get across the border when the Russians came in [in World War II, after 23rd August 1944] 6. He never saw his father again. So they went through quite a tragedy. Her mother worked at the Orthodox episcopate as clerk in Rimnicu Vilcea. She had nothing against Doru marrying my daughter. Although she knew we were Jews. After one year of marriage Andriska was born. A sweet thing happened when Andriska was born; she [Doru’s mother] came from Vilcea to visit the child. He was out on the balcony, in the wicker cradle. Andriska was a beautiful child, and she looked at him: ‘A iesit ceva bun din amestecatura asta.’ [‘Something good came out from this mix’ in Romanian]. This was her only allusion... I mean that the mix had a good outcome. He liked very much being here, he used to stay here for weeks. We were getting along very well.

I told my daughter if anything happened to her child, I would solve it. She burst out: ‘What do you think? I give birth to the child for you or for myself?’ They took away the children... Then they received their assignment, they were transferred to Galac. They went to Galac with the child. They couldn’t find a maid, and there was only that week-long ‘camin’ [daycare]. She told me their children had to live in such filth in Galac... It was a daycare where you took your children on Monday morning, and you brought them home on Saturday afternoon. And when my daughter went there and saw the children were underfed, with bruises, it was terrible, and there was such a smell and filth there. She decided she couldn’t let her children there, and while she was pregnant she look for a maid. And after a few days I she called me on the phone, saying: ‘Mom, we have a problem.’ The husband of that maid suffered stroke, he became paralyzed. So she was unable to get there. ‘What should I do now?’ I said: ‘Take the child and bring it here.’ And that’s it. So I brought up the child. We weren’t willing to destroy him. They were working at the local designing institute, and I brought up Andriska. So I had something to do then.

We had a friend called Ferko Fili, originally from Nagyvarad, and he came once to visit us, and I told him we are desperate because the child is in Galac, and when my daughter was pregnant, I went there, of course, to help her out. It was horrible, you should look at that place from a plane. They were extremely filthy, the block they were living in was full of bedbugs, and even though they disinfected the place, after a week they reappeared; they were living in miserable conditions. And this friend arranged for them to be transferred here to Marosvasarhely. We lived together for four years. All the rooms were empty, we were living two per room. The two children (the first one, the boy, was born in 1974, while the other one, the girl, Daniela Anca, was born in 1978), they and us, six in three rooms. By then they were working here at I.P.J. But someone needed to move elsewhere, because we were too many, six in three rooms. Andris came home tired after work, and he used to take a nap after lunch. Then he always had something more to do, some more work. He used to translate, he did this and that, and if one child started screaming or running around, it was unbearable. But one time Doru became quite desperate, saying: ‘Nu sunt in stare sa-mi fac rost de o locuinta?’ [‘Am I unable to get an apartment?’ in Romanian]. So he went to Macavei, the manager of the institute and requested an apartment. ‘Ce-i? Te-ai certat cu socrii?’ [‘Why?’ Did you have a fight with your parents-in-law?’] He told him we had no fight, we were on very good terms, but he

thought that as the head of the family he is entitled to have his own apartment and his own, independent life. Although we never said anything. The living room and the children's room was theirs, and we lived in the small room, but we were together. I used to do the laundry, and I did this for them, as well. And in the end they gave us an apartment in Meggyesfalva. It was a two-room apartment upstairs, without an elevator. Then I told them it wasn't 'fair' for two people to live in three rooms and four to live in Meggyesfalva in two rooms! So we left them this apartment and went to Meggyesfalva. When this fuss with Ceausescu took place [in December 1989] 7, he got angry, and one week after the revolution poor Andris had a preinfarct. Then the lady-doctor told us to be careful with those four floors, because his heart couldn't take it. From then on I took a chair with me and after each turn he sat down and we climbed those four floors this way. But then we moved here to number 272 on the boulevard, to the ground floor.

I got alienated from religion, we weren't members of the Jewish community for quite a while. You want me to be honest and tell you why we became members of the Jewish community in Marosvasarhely? Due to our friend, Ferike Velcer, who worked at Prodcomplex as manager, and who used to buy us matzah, because we liked it very much. At one moment he told us, look, guys, I can't get you more, because they would only give for me, that is they only gave them the amount allotted for a family. So we signed up. And the people from the Community were very nice, because they never asked us why did we sing up that late. Andris wasn't religious, but neither was I. Andris told me: 'We have to belong somewhere!' There was someone who came every month to collect the membership fee. The poor man has already died. He liked so much to tell stories, and I enjoyed listening to him, but I don't know what his name was. He was an old gentleman. But he stopped coming for a month, for two months, and then we received a call and found out he died, and they asked my husband to go there and pay the fee. It was Andris who went there every time. I have never been at the Community. In 1982 or 1983 we attended a memorial for the Holocaust and I promised myself I would never go anywhere. I was a Jew who didn't know I had to go to the synagogue wearing a shawl. I was so embarrassed there... There [in the synagogue] I knew very few people, because I had no way of knowing any Jews from here. A woman sat next to me, and she gave me one; I don't know why she had two shawls. Several people gave speeches. I know Misi Spielmann also gave one, I knew him because we were on good terms with his parents, but I didn't know the other people from the Community. My daughter said she feels a stranger there, too. Because those who were there, my friends, almost all of them died. Some of them emigrated, but most of them died. I read in the Zsidlic [the publication], I wish I hadn't, because it troubled me to see how many from Nagyvarad were here. The Zsidlic was founded in Israel in 1980.

Andris wanted to emigrate to Israel, right after we got married, but I didn't really liked Israel. Many of his friends are there, and he was there. I often reprove myself for it, because I was the one who said I don't have the strength to move to a new country, because it is possible that it would have been better for my child. But I knew I could never learn that language. I have a very bad sense of language. And that one is one of those dead languages. I liked living here, and I was hoping my mother would come home. Then I hoped my brother would come home. But I got no sign from him. My daughter was seven or eight when I showed her our house in Nagyvarad. I stayed in front of it like a beggar. I didn't go in, because by that time it was already sold. I only was there once, I wasn't able to go there again, because my heart sank, although I wanted to show Doru how beautiful the house was, because he is an architect and he could have valued it. But I never took him there. I have been done out of my money. My uncle's alcohol factory was nationalized. We

went with our children at showed it to them. They couldn't believe the factory was still there. We couldn't revendicate it, because it wasn't registered to my uncle's name, but to her wife's father's name. [Editor's note: It was probably transferred during the strohmann regime.] 8

I didn't know where they were, or if they were alive, I knew nothing about my cousins, but one day Andris, while we were still living in Vilcea, came home and told me he has such good news I would be more happy than to see him. 'What happened?' He looked around and found out that Leitner, my cousins' uncle was still living in Bucharest. He went to him and asked him whether he knew anything about my two cousins, the daughters of my uncle in Tasnad. 'O course I do! One of them lives in England, the other one in America.' And he gave him their addresses. I was so happy I started crying. As I found out later, the worked in a factory [during the Holocaust]. Those who worked in factories had a much better situation. They had a roof over their head, and weren't cold. And they weren't starving as much as the others. After they got liberated, a Swedish company from Sweden took them under their protection and took them to Sweden. They told them 'You can stay there as long as you live.' But how did Agi get acquainted with her English and Evi with her American husband...? Probably in Sweden, but I never found that out. We arranged with my husband's cousin, Gyuri Herschdorfer, to go to Germany still under the Ceausescu regime. This was in the early 1980s. And what a fuss they made until they let us go! We only managed to get the documents following much fuss. We had to produce the invitation and some documents stating they would provide for us, and that we would return; we needed lots and lots of documents. 9 Andris arranged everything. But he always came back displeased. I remember a militian came to us, Andriska started crying in the little room, he was still small, around one and a half years old, and he asked us why we wanted to go to Germany? 'Do you want to dicker?' I told him by no means, I just wanted to meet with my relatives. 'Or your husband has some ideas, he looks for a job?' Under no circumstances, I can guarantee you we'll come back. Well, you can never know. He behaved very badly with me. Then there was another one who came, but this one was more civilized, he only asked me to be careful what we said, because people were talking. The documents have reached the Ministry, and in the end we got the documents. Otherwise I don't think they would let us go. I don't believe they would. Our relatives from Germany sent us money for train tickets for going to Bucharest, and from there we went by plane to Frankfurt. Gyuri was living there, who, I hope, is still alive there in Germany.

I met my cousin Agi, she came to Frankfurt and we spent a week together. We arranged beforehand that we would meet in Germany, because I had only one opportunity to meet them. While we were waiting the plane I was wondering: would I recognize Agi? I saw her so long ago... But we recognized each other. It was a very touching moment. Agi's husband was Jewish, he was called Levi [his surname]. But her daughter married a Christian, and her son also married a Christian woman. They are already assimilated. I don't believe they were observing the traditions. They weren't religious neither. The husband of Evi, the younger one, is called Friedmann. So he is a Jew. They have three daughters, but I don't know any of them. The eldest studied at Oxford. I never met Evi. This is what our family has been reduced to, but I still keep in touch with my uncle from Israel, in my mother's memory, and we write each other. He wrote me, and I wrote him. I never complained to him.

As for the period I spent in Germany, they [the relatives] weren't willing to let me go. Everyone I met, former classmates, acquaintances, former acquaintances from Nagyvarad, they all put some

German Marks in my hand. At a given point I went to my room and started crying because I wasn't a beggar. I never complained about anything, never told anybody I needed anything... because people who had relatives or acquaintances abroad used to complain all the time. They used to say you couldn't this or that... I never complained to anyone. I never asked anyone to send me anything. And it seems these Germans or those who emigrated to Germany knew this, so everyone gave me some money. What was I? A beggar?!

I never went to Israel. My husband was there, though. They organized their class reunion each year, because there, in Israel, there are... there were many people from Nagyvarad. But they only organized the first one in Nagyvarad, only once after the war. Just very few of the ones living abroad used to come, because they were afraid of the Romanians and of the Russians. So after that they organized it each year in Israel. I attended the evening classes of the Jewish high-school and graduated there, so I was entitled to the transport costs, but by the time they realized this, my husband was already dead and I didn't want to go alone. They didn't see there was a section for girls, so they only invited the men. They sent the invitation and money to my husband, and the accommodation there was fully covered for him, because we were forbidden to have foreign currency. The Romanian state never made it difficult, because if they sent money and an invitation they were compelled to let them go. Andris visited my uncle from Arad who emigrated to Israel. His daughter was the most beautiful house he has ever seen, although he saw quite many beautiful houses. He became so 'poor'. We never had money to go together, although I made some quite clear hints to my uncle about me wanting to go visit them. I wasn't that eager to see Israel, I was more interested to see Marta, my cousin, and my aunt. The answer I got was he had no money... He had no money for this [transport], but if I went to Israel, I could live there and they would have given us food. My uncle was a typical Jew, who loved only himself and his small family, but not her sister's daughter. Later it turned out he sold the land he owned in Romania in small pieces to be less conspicuous. 'Anni, you should sign this! Anni, you should sign that!' Because I had the same rights as heiress of my mother as him, and he was aware of that. I signed everything without asking what I was signing, because I was stupid and trusted people. So my and his signature were there on the sales contracts. He never gave me a dime from the money he got. He never gave me anything, and sent the money abroad. He managed to send it, I don't know how. And he was my uncle, my mother's brother; he was very observant, he used to pray with tallit each morning. It was incredibly religious. He was a bigot. Each morning he said his prayers and used to go to the synagogue. But he inherited the y maternal grandmother's ill nature. My uncle died there in Israel. My other two uncles were very nice people.

Andris died in 1994, in August there will be ten years [in 2004] since then. He went to Hungary, because there was a smaller class reunion in Budapest with the friends who were still alive, including people from Israel. He was 72 then. I arranged here with the Red Cross, the SMURD [emergency ambulance] to take him over, because they would put him on the plane there, but my family doctor said it was better that it happened there, because they would heal him there. But they didn't. It was terribly hot that summer, there were 40 degrees in Hungary and they didn't let us bring him home. They cremated him there, and we had to request a special authorization for my daughter to bring the urn home by bus. There was no memorial service, many people asked me why I never buried him. I didn't bury him. He's here. If we were able to bring him home in a casket, I would have buried him according to the Jewish tradition, since he was a member of the Jewish community. I think even the community asked me whether I wanted to bury him. I didn't. He is

here with me... His death shocked me very much and half a year later I got sick and I was taken to the hospital. I was there for 2 weeks. My poor daughter came to visit me each afternoon. Then an apartment became vacant here, and the poor thing was afraid to tell me they would move me again. ‘Mom, don’t do anything, just come with Anca and Picu [the grandchildren]’. Thus I ended up here. I didn’t like moving to the sixth floor, but I kept quiet. I got used to it.

I never told anything about the Jewish traditions to the children. It wasn’t a subject for discussion. My son-in-law Doru used to ask me things. On one Christmas eve, we always observe it, Doru told me he had some idea about the Jews, that they are very smart and they do anything to get everything to themselves, and he would have liked to have at least one person in the family with the brains of a Jew, who can handle any situation, because this is what he heard about them. We are all so soft. We have no Jewish blood. But – and I haven’t told him this – if my grandfather was still alive, this marriage would never have taken place. He would have never accepted it. But we had no argument or misunderstanding on this subject... And Andriska, my grandson, is already thirty years old, so they are together since thirty one years. When my husband was still alive, we always had a Christmas tree and gave each other presents. We even celebrated it if y grandparents weren’t there [in Nagyvarad]. I think it is a beautiful holiday, it is an intimate, family holiday.

My grandchildren were not baptized. I have no say in this matter. But my daughter, she is Jewish, like me... she wears the Star of David on her necklace, although she is baptized as Christian. I had her baptized when she was seven. She is Catholic, because my lady-friend was also a Catholic. I loved Kamilla very much, and she loved my daughter, as well. She was baptized in the Saint Ladislaus church in Nagyvarad. I wanted to prevent her going through I did. Andris told me to do what I wanted, and the priest told me, because we had a preliminary discussion, to bring her father, as well. I told him I thought I didn’t think I was able to. And he didn’t go there. It was all the same to me what religion she would have, I only wanted her not to be Jewish. But now she considers herself Jewish. She doesn’t observe the religious prescriptions, she doesn’t attend the service even on high holidays. But when we have been invited to the Pesach festivity [Editor’s note: to Seder eve to the Jewish community of Marosvasarhely], I was really sick then, so I wasn’t able to go, but she attended it with my grandchild. She usually goes to the Community on Seder eve. And each month she goes there for medications. The medications are supplied by the Scots [Editor’s note: Anna Gaspar refers to the Jewish organization ‘Targu Mures Trust’ from Glasgow, which provides financial aid for the Jewry from Marosvasarhely, http://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/holocaust/testimonies/holocaust_remembrance_2004_-_targu_mures.htm], and I’m getting three kinds of drugs from the district doctor, some more expensive ones, because I as getting them for free until now, but not anymore, I can get some of them with a discount of 50%, one of them with a discount of 90% and the three cheaper ones are supplied by the Community. And I was really moved when they came and offered me to supply me with medications. Of course I accepted, I have to take six or seven types of drugs. This meant a lot. When the Scots come here they usually ask me whether I can receive them. So they come here. I only ask them not to stay too long. I’ve been visited already by three groups.

Five or six years ago I’ve started to get some compensation from Germany, every three months. I don’t know exactly how much, at first they gave me German Marks, then Euros. Each year, in December or January, I have to send a notary power of attorney stating I’m still alive, and as soon

as I die [this expires]..., my children don't inherit this. And the truth is I help them out with this amount. I bought Andriska a computer, the first one, then a second one, and now we had the gas connected for him, central heating. They are opposing this anyway they can, but in the end they will accept it. I wish at least to see while I'm still alive that they have some benefit from my suffering. I receive half of the pension of Andris as retired chief engineer. The Romanian government also gives me some compensation as former deportee, 300,000 [old] lei per month. From the pension and from the compensation it's not possible to sustain this apartment. If I was not getting the compensation from Germany, I would die of hunger... I don't like to receive, because I would feel indebted. But if the children get me flowers, I'm very happy. But if feel sick and ask my daughter to bring me some bread she does, and I give her the 9,500 lei [for the bread]. I wouldn't like to be provided for.

Life Today

I have a fixed routine. Everyone who knows me laughs at this. Well, I don't get up early in the morning. First of all there is no reason why I should. Secondly I'm a light sleeper. If I manage to sleep four hours a night, I'm feeling like I slept a lot. I usually wake up around seven or eight o'clock, but mostly around eight, and if I see it's just half past seven, I stay in bed for half an hour more. Then I wake up, go to the bathroom; I don't have to tell you what I'm doing there, do I? I can't stand if someone walks around in night robe or pyjamas. I get dressed, go to the kitchen, put the water for tea on the stove, come back to the room, put the bed-linen to air, then lock everything, make tea and drink it while eating a slice of bread with nothing on it. I don't need to put anything on it. My breakfast is a slice of bread, nothing more. Before I ate even less for breakfast, I only had a cup of coffee, but I stopped doing that. I never go to sleep until I don't decide what to cook the next day. And I don't usually cook for one day, the soup I'm making usually lasts three or four days, because I love soup. I'm usually make it, let's say, on Monday. On Monday I don't have anywhere to go, because the woman from the Jewish Community comes here. By eleven o'clock lunch is prepared, and I usually eat lunch around twelve o'clock, she leaves and I go to the bathroom and take a bath. An Mari becomes a lady, because until then, while I'm in the kitchen, I'm just Mari. I usually sit down in the room to watch TV and knit. I always have to have something to knit, because otherwise I'm going crazy, because I can't just sit there and do nothing, and I never take a nap in the afternoon. At five o'clock I eat my apple and a slice of bread; this is my snack, and I eat dinner at seven. Then I sit down again, but I never do needlework at electric light, except for winter, because I can't just watch TV from four o'clock. The Hungarian TV station is good for me, because I can work better when it's on. I usually go to bed around 11 pm. This is my typical Monday.

On Tuesday the same goes around, in the morning I water the flowers, because I water them every other day, make the bed, and it takes me a while to do the room, because I don't like mess. Then I go out. No matter if for matches or bread, I just go out. And I walk on the banks of the [Poklos] creek, there are some benches there. [Editor's note: The block is almost on the banks of the creek.] If I get tired, I sit down. I go shopping, today a kilogram of potatoes; 'Only a kilo?' [the seller asks me]. Well, then make it two kilos, but you bring it home to me. I'm buying poatoes, vegetables, eggs, for each other day I have some shopping scheduled. Because they told my daughter once 'your mother came home with two shopping bags.' I told her: 'look, dear, can you even imagine I'm carrying stuff?' In one of them I had the bread, in the other one the vegetables. I had two bags just

to help me keep my balance. I never carry heavy stuff, because I can't. If the weather is nice, I have some bench-acquaintances I don't even know their names, but we used to gather there, five-four 'young' women like myself, and we discuss things of life. I arrive home around 11 am, I heat the lunch, but I don't take a bath then, only every other day. Not that I wouldn't take a bath, but because it's one of the highlights of my life, when I can sit in hot water. I have a very dry skin, so I have to use some cream, otherwise it really itches. I either take no bath or scratch myself. I have a really funny neighbor; if she hears water seething for quite long, she turns on the tap as well. So she doesn't have to let it run, because I usually have to run it for ten or twenty minutes, and today, for example, I had to run it for half an hour, and I still had no hot water. It just can't come up until the sixth floor. We reported this, but they told me I should go and ask the dwellers to bathe more frequently. How am I supposed to do that? So this is my routine.

And on Wednesday it all starts over. I go and buy some bread, every other day I buy myself half of a piece of bread with potatoes from the Eldi, and some fruit, I still eat apple, while strawberry is too expensive for me. But what is really difficult for me are the Saturdays and Sundays. The kids built themselves a small weekend cottage. It is really nice, my daughter told me their relaxation means growing potatoes and onion, because they have a small garden and they can relax there... it is a beautiful area in Ratosnya. Anywhere you look you see only mountains and the air is really fresh. There is a stupid cock in the neighborhood, I really like listening to it, it crows from dawn to nightfall. Not only in the morning, but all day long. And you can hear dogs barking, well, it has a typical countryside atmosphere. They took me there for my birthday. And I loved it. The problem is I can't stay there for two days. They usually go there on Friday afternoon and spend the Saturday and Sunday there. So Doru would have to come for me, but I don't expect him to do this. But on that occasion they only went there for a day, and they took me along. My doctor come to me the next day. My family doctor visits me once a month. I'm not allowed to go there because it's full of coughing people. He told me: 'Ceva nu-mi place la dumneavoastra, ceva nu e in regula.' ['There something I don't like, something is wrong' in Romanian]. And I told him I was out. He told me wouldn't tell me not to, but to do it more rarely. This is some stress as well. Everything is stress. So on Saturdays and Sundays I'm here alone. They call me on the phone every day, because this is not a problem anymore, now with the mobile phones, but still I'm here alone. It is hard, because when my daughter comes she usually calls me from the office in the morning, so we keep in touch. But on those occasions she only calls me once a day. And when they go out on the weekend I always think about what would happen if I fell sick then. I can't call them in Ratosnya with this phone. 'Mom, let us by you a mobile phone.' Don't, because I don't need it. I don't need a mobile phone. But I gave their number to my neighbor. I hope I'll be strong enough to walk there. So these are the toughest days of the week. But my former inmate from Brasov, Edit calls me on the phone on Saturdays or Sundays. Just to make me feel I'm not that alone. And I'm not on very good terms with ay of my neighbors , because I don't need them spreading around all kinds of rumors, I don't need it.

At the last census I filled out the form as follows: Nationalitatea: evreu, Religie: mosaica [Ethnic origin: Jew, of Jewish religion, in Romanian]. The lady congratulated me, she was a teacher, because many prefer to deny their religion. She was a Hungarian woman, and since then, every time we meet on the street, she embraces me and tells me: 'I would like to chat more with you.' And I get this reaction everywhere I go, and I really enjoy being loved by everyone I'm speaking or got acquainted with. But I'm not able to make new friends and I never go anywhere. I very rarely

visit he kids, although I only have to take the elevator. They celebrate Christmas and Easter according to the Christian traditions. The children are usually here on these occasions, and I'm invited too, of course, for Christmas Eve. I became unwell, although I didn't do anything, but the stress that's not for me.

I'm not proud to be Jewish because I suffered quite a lot due to this. And suffering is much stronger than pride. Jews are the chosen nation because they had to endure constant suffering. They are suffering since antiquity... And anti-Semitism is present even to this day. But I don't know why. What is the cause? What makes us different from the others? We have different customs. But why should that nation be harassed? Why? And why did the Albanians fight the Serbs? Why? Because one is Albanian and the other one is Serbian? I think man is all the same, not Romanian, Hungarian, Jew, Serbian or whatever. It would be nice to see the man in the other person and not his/her religion or customs. Respect his/her traditions, the spirit he/she was educated in and what he/she tries to practice. Respect his/her traditions the same way he/she respects yours.

Glossary:

1 Second Vienna Dictate

The Romanian and Hungarian governments carried on negotiations about the territorial partition of Transylvania in August 1940. Due to their conflict of interests, the negotiations turned out to be fruitless. In order to avoid violent conflict a German-Italian court of arbitration was set up, following Hitler's directives, which was also accepted by the parties. The verdict was pronounced on 30th August 1940 in Vienna: Hungary got back a territory of 43,000 km² with 2,5 million inhabitants. This territory (Northern Transylvania, Seklerland) was populated mainly by Hungarians (52% according to the Hungarian census and 38% according to the Romanian one) but at the same time more than 1 million Romanians got under the authority of Hungary. Although Romania had 19 days for capitulation, the Hungarian troops entered Transylvania on 5th September. The verdict was disapproved by several Western European countries and the US; the UK considered it a forced dictate and refused to recognize its validity.

2 Hungarian era (1940-1944)

The expression Hungarian era refers to the period between 30 August 1940 - 15 October 1944 in Transylvania. As a result of the Trianon peace treaties in 1920 the eastern part of Hungary (Maramures, Crisana, Banat, Transylvania) was annexed to Romania. Two million inhabitants of Hungarian nationality came under Romanian rule. In the summer of 1940, under pressure from Berlin and Rome, the Romanian government agreed to return Northern Transylvania, where the majority of the Hungarians lived, to Hungary. The anti-Jewish laws introduced in 1938 and 1939 in Hungary were also applied in Northern Transylvania. Following the German occupation of Hungary on 19th March 1944, Jews from Northern Transylvania were deported to and killed in concentration camps along with Jews from all over Hungary except for Budapest. Northern Transylvania belonged to Hungary until the fall of 1944, when the Soviet troops entered and introduced a regime of military administration that sustained local autonomy. The military administration ended on 9th March 1945 when the Romanian administration was reintroduced in all the Western territories lost in 1940.

3 Numerus clausus in Hungary
The general meaning of the term is restriction of admission to secondary school or university for economic and/or political reasons. The Numerus Clausus Act passed in Hungary in 1920 was the first anti-Jewish law in Europe. It regulated the admission of students to higher educational institutions by stating that aside from the applicants' national loyalty and moral reliability, their origin had to be taken into account as well. The number of students of the various ethnic and national minorities had to correspond to their proportion in the population of Hungary. After the introduction of this act the number of students of Jewish origin at Hungarian universities declined dramatically.

4 2
Anti-Jewish laws in Hungary (to be translated from Hungarian)

5 Ceausescu, Nicolae (1918-1989)
Communist head of Romania between 1965 and 1989. He followed a policy of nationalism and non-intervention into the internal affairs of other countries. The internal political, economic and social situation was marked by the cult of his personality, as well as by terror, institutionalized by the Securitate, the Romanian political police. The Ceausescu regime was marked by disastrous economic schemes and became increasingly repressive and corrupt. There were frequent food shortages, lack of electricity and heating, which made everyday life unbearable. In December 1989 a popular uprising, joined by the army, led to the arrest and execution of both Ceausescu and his wife, Elena, who had been deputy Prime Minister since 1980.

6 23 August 1944
On that day the Romanian Army switched sides and changed its World War II alliances, which resulted in the state of war against the German Third Reich. The Royal head of the Romanian state, King Michael I, arrested the head of government, Marshal Ion Antonescu, who was unwilling to accept an unconditional surrender to the Allies.

7 Romanian Revolution of 1989
In December 1989, a revolt in Romania deposed the communist dictator Ceausescu. Anti-government violence started in Timisoara and spread to other cities. When army units joined the uprising, Ceausescu fled, but he was captured and executed on 25th December along with his wife. A provisional government was established, with Ion Iliescu, a former Communist Party official, as president. In the elections of May 1990 Iliescu won the presidency and his party, the Democratic National Salvation Front, obtained an overwhelming majority in the legislature.

8 Strohmann system
sometimes called the Aladar system; Jewish business owners were forced to take on Christian partners in their companies, giving them a stake in the business. Sometimes Christians would take on this role out of friendship and not for profits. This system came into being because of the anti-

Jewish laws, which strongly restricted the economic options of Jewish entrepreneurs. In accordance with this law, a number of Jewish business licenses were revoked and no new licenses were issued. The Strohmann system insured a degree of survival for some Jewish businesses for varying lengths of time.

9 Travel into and out of Romania (Romanian citizens abroad, and foreigners into Romania)

The regulations made it extremely difficult for Romanian citizens to travel into non-socialist countries. One could apply for a passport every second year; however, the police could refuse its issue without offering any explanation. One had to attach to the application for a passport a certificate from work, school or university proving the proper behavior of the applicant, and an invitation letter from a relative or an acquaintance had to be enclosed too. If a whole family solicited for passports, the authorities usually refused to issue a passport for one member of the family, thus forcing the traveler to return. The law controlled very severely the travel of foreigners into Romania. No matter if they were tourists or visited their family, foreign citizens had to report when entering the country the number of days they intended to stay, and had to exchange a certain amount of money defined by the law for every day they intended to spend in Romania. Furthermore a foreign citizen could stay only in a hotel. Any individual Romanian citizen could get a significant fine if it turned out that they secured accommodation for a foreigner. The only exception were first degree relatives, but they also had to be reported to the police, indicating the number of days they would spend at the person accommodating them.