Edita Adler

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Mrs. Adler is a 66-year-old woman, who lives in an apartment in an old but imposing house in the center of Brasov. Before the war, her family owned the whole building, but now she only has this three-bedroom apartment on the second floor left. She is a slim woman with beautiful short white hair and stunning blue eyes. She doesn't look her age, her cheekbones are as rosy as you would have expected them to be 10 or 20 years ago. She is hospitable, and her living-room is clean. You can tell that she was a doctor: her speech is precise, and her answers short. She likes to be exact in everything she says. After a few hours of talking, her demeanor lightens up, and she no longer appears so severe. It is only now that her main trait surfaces: she is a caring and devoted woman, who has borne a family on her shoulders for almost 30 years, as a doctor, as a wife and as a daughter.

My family background

My paternal grandfather, Moise Springer, was born in 1871 in Baraolt, but for as long as I knew him, he lived in Brasov, where he worked as a dentist. He moved to Brasov in 1920. His mother tongue was Hungarian, and I think he studied at some medical school in Budapest in order to become a dentist. He wasn't a very religious man. He was Neolog 1, a rather modern man for those times, but on Sabbath he went to the synagogue and didn't work. Of course, he also went to the synagogue on the high holidays. He fasted on Yom Kippur. Also, on Saturdays there were traditional dishes served at lunch. I don't know if the kashrut was observed in the house, but I know, he never ate pork. He wasn't the only child, he had two more sisters, but I don't remember their names.

My grandfather had a good financial situation, which enabled him to buy the house he lived in for the rest of his life with his family, here, in Brasov. It was a two-storied house in the very center of Brasov, with running water and electricity, and with a garden. His practice was in the house as well. He had two servants and he could also afford three or four technicians who worked for him. I remember that at one time, one of the technicians lived in the house. My grandfather supported his family, which was rather big: a wife and six children. He was married to Adela Springer, who was born in 1874. I don't know my grandmother's maiden name. My grandfather went on vacations with his family, that is with the kids who were old enough to travel and his wife. He traveled by train to

Paris, to Israel - I remember seeing a photo of him taken in Jerusalem - to Karlsbad 2 and Budapest. I've only heard about his trips. My grandfather never talked to me about them, and neither did my father; he didn't have time for that.

I never met my paternal grandmother, she passed away a year before I was born, in 1936. From what I heard about her, she was a very severe woman, especially with the children. She never hired a fraulein [governess] to take care of them, not to my knowledge at least. She was fond of the garden, where she planted jasmine, roses and lilacs. In the garden, which had about 280 square meters, there were also plum trees and a greengage tree, which gave a wonderful juicy type of plums, almost like peaches. I don't know more about my grandmother. My father was a very busy man and he didn't have time for family stories. My grandfather sat shivah after my grandmother's death in 1936.

My grandfather had no sense for politics; he was passionate about his work and about his family. But as a good Jew, he had in his house the Keren Kayemet Leisrael 3 box. He was a well-read man. He had a huge library, which consisted mainly of books on philosophy and history, but he also had religious books like the Siddur, which I found later. He got along well with his neighbors, but I believe most of his friends were Jewish people he met at the synagogue. I didn't get to meet his friends, I was busy with school, I was only eight years old when me and my family moved from Bucharest to Brasov in 1945. We stayed in the same house with him.

He was a serious man, but he didn't lack a sense of humor. He was a peaceful person, who enjoyed spending time with his family. For example, whenever I came back from school, he would ask me to come into his room and tell him what I had done in school that day, what grades I had received. He also liked to listen to music with me: there was an old radio in the house, and he listened to operettas which were popular back then, by Strauss or Lehar. [Strauss, Richard (1864-1949): German composer, famous for his operas Salome, based on Wilde's play, Elektra and the tone poems Till Eulenspiegel and Don Quixote. Lehar, Franz (1870-1948): Hungarian composer of famous operettas like The Merry Widow, The Count of Luxembourg and The Land of Smiles.]

My grandfather also took me and my sister, Alice Raphael, nee Springer, to the theater. I remember one time we had planned to go to the theater, but I came home from school upset because I had received a bad mark in Russian, so I decided to punish myself and not go; I felt I didn't deserve it. [Editor's note: It was after World War II when it was obligatory to learn Russian in Romania.] But my grandfather forgave me, and we went to the theater after all.

My father had four brothers and one sister. Her name was Ilus Benedek, nee Springer, born in Brasov in 1910. She married a Jew called Benedek and had a daughter, Vera Benedek. She went to Israel in 1957, and that's where she died in 1974. The brothers were: Arthur Springer, also a dentist, born in Brasov in 1899. He married a Jew called Rozsa Springer, nee Fried, and went to Israel. They had a daughter, Erika Springer. Arthur died in Israel in 1974 or 1975. Then there was Gyula Springer, born in Brasov in 1904, who lived in Haifa. He was also a dentist. He was married to Paraschiva Springer, nee Stein; they had no children. He died in Israel, but I don't know when. My father's third brother, Ludovic Springer, was born in Brasov in 1907. He worked as a dentist in Los Angeles. He was married to Lizica Springer, a Romanian, and they had a daughter, now dead unfortunately, Ani Springer. Ludovic died in Los Angeles in 1975. The fourth brother, Iozsef Springer, was born in 1909 in Brasov, and he moved to the USA, to Los Angeles. He became a

fashion designer, and married Margaret Springer; they have two daughters, Diana and Patricia Springer. He died in Los Angeles in 1985.

My father, Carol Springer, was born in Brasov in 1901. His mother tongue was Hungarian. He studied at some medical school in Budapest and Berlin and at a business high school in Budapest. He worked as a dentist in Bucharest. He was Neolog, only went to the synagogue on Friday evenings and on the high holidays and didn't observe the kashrut or dress traditionally. He married my mother, Magdalena Springer, nee Iszakovics, in 1936. It was an arranged marriage: my father's family had met my mother's some time before, and they had established that their children would meet and marry, and so it was. The wedding took place in Odorhei, in my maternal parents' garden; I think the rabbi came there.

My maternal grandfather, Bernard Iszakovics, was born in Sighetul Marmatiei in 1875, but he spent most of his life in Odorhei [Odorheiu-Secuiesc]. He spoke Hungarian. He was Neolog and not very religious, but he went to the synagogue on Saturdays and on the high holidays. He was a watchmaker and he also owned a jewelry shop in the center of town. He imported luxury items from Switzerland. He ordered them from an intermediary who went to Switzerland and brought what my grandfather had asked for: that and that many gold snuff-boxes, that and that many gold necklaces, diamond rings and earrings, silver candlesticks and so on. He didn't do the handwork in watch mending himself; he had an employee who did it. My grandfather mostly dealt in selling jewelry.

My grandmother, Adela Iszakovics, helped him run the shop: she had graduated from a business high school in Budapest and did the bookkeeping for him. She was born in Targu-Secuiesc in 1885, and she spoke Hungarian as well. Grandmother was Neolog, like my grandfather, she didn't observe the kashrut, but she lit the candles every Friday evening and went to the synagogue on the high holidays.

Grandfather had a good financial situation, but it was short-lived: during World War I, when he was in the Austria-Hungarian KuK army 4, he was a prisoner in Siberia from 1914-1918. When he came back, it took him a while to get his life back on track and reopen his shop. During World War II he was deported with my grandmother to Auschwitz and again he lost everything.

Growing Up

I personally never saw his shop because I didn't visit Odorhei until 1945, and when I did, I only saw the building where it had been, from the outside. My grandparents lived in a rented house with three rooms and a garden in the center of town; they didn't grow anything, just had some flowers and maybe some fruit trees. Their house had electricity, but there was no running water in Odorhei in the 1940s; a carter brought drinking water in two and five-liter earthen vessels. Each citizen had some sort of subscription, and the cart with the water - I believe some of it was mineral water - came every day. Grandmother had two servants, who cooked and did the chores around the house. I remember that the laundry was washed in Tarnava [Tarnava Mare, one of the main tributaries of Mures river, located in the Tarnave Plateau]. They didn't observe the kashrut strictly, but for Pesach, for example, they had separate tableware.

Odorhei was a civilized small town back then, with a lot of Jews. Most of their social life was spent at the Jewish community club, which organized all sorts of events: balls on Purim, Chanukkah

celebrations and so on. But people were far more civil, peaceful and friendly than they are nowadays - you can see it everywhere around you. Jews and Romanians and Hungarians - most of the town's population was Hungarian - lived peacefully in Odorhei, they had no quarrels. I think my grandparents went on vacations, by train of course, to places that were close or fairly close, like Budapest and Karlsbad, or spas in the country, like Tusnad [famous Romanian spa located in the vicinity of Odorheiu-Secuiesc].

I don't know many things about my maternal grandparents because they lived far from Bucharest [Odorheiu Secuiesc is 342 km from Bucharest], and we couldn't travel there very often. Then, the border with Austria-Hungary was closed, so we couldn't go even if we had wanted to. [Editor's note: Edita mistakenly says Austria-Hungary, she actually refers to the 'Hungarian era' 5] In 1943, I think, my grandparents were deported to Auschwitz, and that's where my grandmother died, in 1944. [Editor's note: The deportations in Transylvania took place in April/May 1944.]

My grandmother had two sisters. One of them died in Auschwitz. The other one, named Klari, married in Yugoslavia and emigrated to Israel. Only my grandfather came back from Auschwitz when the war was over, and he stayed in Odorhei. After he returned, he worked as a watchmaker in Odorhei; he was employed in a little workshop. Grandfather visited us in Brasov very rarely; I remember him as a kind man, friendly and gentle. My sister and I were always happy to hear he was coming, but he stayed for no more than a week. He died in Odorhei in 1955, and I think he was buried in the municipal cemetery, there was no Jewish cemetery there. I don't think anyone recited the Kaddish. I was at his funeral, but I don't remember it; it was too long ago.

My mother had one sister, Klara Stern, nee Iszakovics, who was born in 1909 and is still alive. She lives in Holon, Israel. She married a Jew from Targu Mures, named Dezideriu Stern, who was a watchmaker, and they had two children, Carmen and Erwin Stern, when she was still here, in the country. She left for Israel in 1962. There she worked as a seamstress in small workshops. Carmen works as a kindergarten teacher and has her own family. Erwin too is married and has three children. He worked as an assistant radiologist for the army for more than 25 years, and now he works for private clinics.

After my mother married my father, she came to live with him in Bucharest. I was born in Bucharest in 1937, and my sister, Alice, in 1938. I remember, there were Jewish neighborhoods in Bucharest, especially in the area of Dudesti, Vacaresti and Mosilor Streets. Jews were mostly craftsmen, like furriers, haberdashers, shoemakers and tailors, but also intellectuals, such as lawyers and doctors. The town had a big Jewish community, and six to eight synagogues, but I know this only from what I've read. When I was little, my parents didn't participate in the Jewish community life much.

In 1939 the persecution of Jews had already begun, and my parents had to face a lot of problems: the anti-Jewish laws in Romania 6 were enforced, my father was drafted to forced labor in Bucharest and couldn't support his family. People discussed Nazism and the deportation that had already begun in Germany; I don't remember where my parents found out from, maybe it was already in the newspapers. Anyway, I remember they were very worried about their future, but they didn't discuss it with me, then or later, they usually didn't share their private thoughts with us children.

We lived in a rented house in the center of Bucharest. It wasn't very big: it had two rooms, a kitchen and a bathroom, a large courtyard, running water and electricity. We had to rent the house, although the rents were very high, because father was just getting started in life and didn't have enough money to buy a place of his own. Before World War II started, the financial situation of the family was rather good; my father earned enough to provide a comfortable, yet not luxurious, life for us. He ran his own practice, which was located in the same house where we lived. My mother kept one servant, who helped with the cleaning, but she did the cooking herself. The food wasn't exactly kosher, and there were no separate pots for dairy and meat products. It wasn't possible to observe that: the times were hard, you could smell the war in the air, and people were making supplies of food, of clothing, of soap and so on because they knew that kind of merchandise would be hard to find during the war. Money was wisely spent in our family, as the war drew near.

My mother was a very severe person; my sister and I always had to obey her every word: the words 'no' or 'I don't want to' weren't in our vocabulary. For example, we were allowed to go to the cinema once a week, and we had to be home at 8; that actually meant that at 5 minutes to 8, at the latest, we had to be home. Punctuality was a must. We had to take good care of our clothes, to study, to be honest, not to postpone things. We had to clean our shoes, to sew our own buttons, or hem our dresses, even though the servant could have done that. But my mother wanted us to do it, so that we would know how to do it later. If she said we had to do some cleaning in our room that meant no going out that day. But in society she was a pleasant, coquette and merry woman. My father was also very strict with us, kids, but he was a good-hearted man. He just didn't show his feelings. He always believed he knew what was best for us.

We had a library in the house: my parents had all the Russian, Hungarian and German classics - all in Hungarian. There were also some religious books, but not so many, only what my father and mother needed for the prayers. They also read newspapers, like Drum Nou [New Way]. They didn't have time to go to the library, but there was no need: we had plenty of books at home. My parents never advised me what to read, but there was no need: we had books from school that were compulsory to read.

My parents weren't very religious, but my father always went to the synagogue on Friday evening, and we had to go with him, even if we didn't feel like it. On Friday evenings my mother always lit the candles, and we had poultry soup with home-made noodles, the traditional sponge cake [challah], then boiled meat with potatoes, tomato sauce, apple pie and fruit.

On Chanukkah we, the kids, received some money, but it was just symbolical. My parents never gave us big presents, they didn't want to spoil us. They always said that we weren't allowed to ask for things because they knew better what we needed, and they would get that for us. So we never asked for things, toys or presents, not even on holidays. I don't remember ever wearing a mask on Purim before the war; I was too little and the times weren't exactly for celebrating. But we did hand out cookies to friends. And after the war, communism had already started, and that kind of manifestations weren't well seen. But all our family fasted on Yom Kippur, and so did I after I turned 12. I never had a favorite holiday; I liked them all: parents didn't work, there were friends coming over, dining and celebrating.

I believe my parents' close circle of friends was Jewish; they were colleagues of my father's and their wives. But they had some good Romanian and Hungarian friends as well: Mrs. Georgeta

Pasan, a Romanian, for example. Her husband owned a small watchmaker's shop near our house, and she became a good friend of my mother's; they were about the same age. During the war Jews were forbidden to travel or leave Bucharest, so when all the disorder started, Mrs. Pasan took my sister and me to Focsani [town in the south of Moldova, 181 km from Bucharest], where she was originally from, for a few months during the summer of 1943, I think. She took this risk for my mother's sake - but it was her who had the idea - she could have been arrested and imprisoned for a year. She declared to the ticket inspector on the train that we were her children. We stayed in her house, with her parents and a sister of hers; it was more like a vacation in the countryside, we didn't do anything special. Anti-Semitism wasn't a real issue there by then. Mrs. Pasan was also a big help for my mother after the war ended; their friendship continued. When my mother was sick, Mrs. Pasan came to our house here, in Brasov, and looked after her for as long as it was necessary.

I didn't suffer from anti-Semitism, but I remember some incidents concerning my mother and my father: my mother was walking in the street one day, and she was wearing a little magen David on her necklace. Somebody, probably a fascist or a legionary 7 noticed, and told her to take it off, saying that she wasn't allowed to wear it. So my mother ended up being taken to the Siguranta [the former name of the Securitate] 8 for that, but, fortunately, the headquarters of Siguranta were in the house right next to ours, so they knew us as neighbors: they let her go, but warned her not to wear a magen David anymore, because the war was on its way, and it would be safer for her not to.

Of course, my father suffered because of the anti-Jewish laws: he could no longer be a dentist in his practice, and he was drafted for forced labor for almost three years, from 1941 to 1944. He worked in Bucharest, so he slept at home, but we barely saw him: he left at 6 o'clock in the morning and came back at 10, late in the evening. He had to clean the snow from the streets, work in construction; it was hard work. Moreover, after he came home from forced labor, he had to practice medicine during the night, illegally, because the family had to be supported somehow: he had a few loyal patients, who came to him late at night, and my father worked until 12 or 1 o'clock in the night, to make some money for the family.

During the war

What I remember best are the worries of the family during that period: worries about the future, about surviving, about providing for the ones you love. One time, my mother was severely ill; she had pneumonia. It was very hard for my father to convince his supervisor from the army, an officer, to let him go for a few hours and fetch a doctor for his wife. During that time, the deportation of the Jews to Transnistria 9 began; first in Moldova, and Bucharest was next on the list. Each Jewish family received orders, including us, to prepare a small suitcase with the essentials - one we could carry - and be ready for deportation. Luckily for us, the order never came. Antonescu 10 made a deal with Hitler, and convinced him to stop the deportation from Bucharest, so that the face of Germany would no longer be stained by other war crimes. So we escaped deportation, but it was close: the trains were ready and waiting for us at the railway station.

During the war, in 1943 I think, my maternal grandparents and aunt Klara, my mother's sister, who lived with them in Odorhei, were deported to Auschwitz. When I was eight years old, we still lived in Bucharest, but we had come for the summer to Brasov, to our paternal grandfather because the doctor advised my father to take my mother out of Bucharest. She had just found out that her

mother had been gassed, and she had terrible neurosis. I don't know how my mother found out about her mother's death, but I do know it was before her father came home. She was to be taken away from her familiar circle of friends, where she could discuss the subject over and over again and get more disturbed than she already was. So we came to Brasov. This was my first ride on a train, I remember, when we were traveling from Bucharest to Brasov. I remember it because at the station in Ploiesti our train had to wait for a few hours because on a parallel railway there was another train which had to go first: it was a cattle train, full of people, Saxons who were deported for forced labor to Siberia.

My father sent us with mother to Intorsura Buzaului [a well-known holiday destination, 36 km from Brasov], to stay for a few weeks at a peasants' house. Meanwhile, he returned to Bucharest. And one day, in July, somebody knocked at the door. When my father opened, it was a short young woman, around 22, all skin and bones, bold, with a kerchief over her head. She was wearing army boots size 44, although, as we later found out, her tiny feet were size 35, and a long black men's overcoat in that July heat, tied with a rope around the waist. My father asked her, 'Who are you looking for?' And only then the woman spoke: 'Carol!'. It was only by her voice that my father recognized his sister-in-law, Klara.

She was lucky to make it because she was young and strong and fit to work, so the Germans had sent her to an armament factory, somewhere nearby the concentration camp, where she had to assemble bombs. She came home when the camp was liberated. My father brought her to Brasov, to my paternal grandfather's, but first told her that her sister wasn't well, and asked her to eat, rest for a few days, and borrow a dress from her sister's wardrobe. Then he would take her to see her sister. Father phoned mother and told her that on Saturday he would come with guests, but he didn't want to say who it was, so that my mother wouldn't be more troubled than she already was. He said it would be a surprise. Then Saturday came, and we were at the train station, the train arrived and my father was taking off some suitcases, but there was no sign of the guest. My mother was curious, and eventually my father announced: 'The guest is your sister!'

When they saw each other, they both started crying. My mother didn't know that her sister Klara had escaped: back then there was no mail, no newspaper; one could only ask those who had returned: 'Did you know her? Did you meet her there? Is she dead?' My mother had thought Klara was dead. Finding out that she was alive was a big moral support for my mother. Klara recovered quickly, and soon she started working in Brasov, I believe it was tailoring. Then she moved to Targu Mures, where she married a Jew named Stern and in 1962 she made aliyah. As I mentioned before, she's still alive and lives in Holon.

We were in Bucharest during the bombings in 1941/2 [Editor's note: actually, the American raids occurred on 4th April 1944]. It was 4th April, I remember exactly, when the alarm went off for the first time. My parents had an acquaintance, Mrs. David, who lived not very far from us, in a house with a garden. In the garden she had a shelter and that's where we went during the first air raid. I remember we were running down the street, and I looked up: there was a long row of airplanes, shining in the sun. They had a beautiful silver color and I said: 'Look, what beautiful birds!' In fact, they were airplanes, of course, and had already starting bombing Bucharest.

Another shelter was about 50 meters away from our house, in the basement of an eight-story apartment block. There were two underground basements: women and children hid in the lower

one, and men in the one that was higher up and closer to the surface. We went down through a sewer, using a ladder: it was scary to descend a few meters into total darkness. And when a bomb fell near the shelter, the blast was so strong that you were practically thrown from one bench to the opposite wall of the shelter. When the alarm went off in the morning, signaling that the raid was over, we came out: it was still dark outside, and you could see a red, red sky, because of the flames, where the bombs had hit houses. Our house wasn't bombed, but one bomb fell quite close: One time, when we got out of the shelter, we saw all the curtains from our windows fluttering in the wind: the windows had been broken by a nearby blast.

Post-war

The first grade, my sister and I studied in Bucharest, in a normal state school; we started in 1944. But then, in 1945, we moved to Brasov. I don't know exactly why my father made that decision, but it must have had something to do with the fact that my grandfather was getting old. We lived in the same house with him, and my father took over his practice, so my grandfather retired when we came to Brasov. All this time my mother was a housewife. The rest of the grades, up to the 6th, which back then meant high school, I studied in the Jewish school in Brasov.

My parents wanted me to have a Jewish education as well. I only learnt Hungarian when I moved here, to Brasov. In Bucharest it was forbidden, with the war and all, to speak any other language except Romanian. You could have been taken to the police, and maybe receive a reprimand, nothing worse than that though. But here, as everybody seemed to speak Hungarian and used it rather frequently, I learnt it as well. We spoke Romanian in the family while we were in Bucharest, but when we moved to Brasov, my parents started talking Hungarian. I liked school, so I had many favorite subjects: I liked drawing, algebra, foreign languages and Romanian language and literature. But I didn't fancy the principal of the Jewish school, Mr. Brief, much: he was very strict. It happened that he punished my sister because she laughed during classes - we were in the same class. She was given two hours' detention after classes, and only after that she was allowed to go home. And at home mother would spank her with a pot stick over the buttocks; she never forgave indiscipline in school.

At home we continued to observe the high holidays and the tradition: there was the traditional Saturday meal, my mother made cholent, that is bean stew, with veal and pearl barley. The food wasn't kosher, but we observed the high holidays. We had a cleaning on the day before Pesach, but we didn't overdo it. We had matzah and didn't cook anything that required flour. Grandfather said the blessings and read about the history of Pesach, about what it means. He asked the mah nishtanah, and there was the afikoman, which my sister usually found. We had the traditional Pesach dinner: poultry soup with dumplings, boiled poultry and some cake made of matzah flour. And as long as grandfather lived, until around 1955, we had special tableware that we kept in the attic for Pesach.

After elementary school, my sister and I went to Unirea high school in Brasov; it was a school for girls only back then. We started in the same grade, although she was one year younger than me; my parents wanted us to be at the same level with our studies. I liked all of my teachers: they were good people who really cared for our education; it was impossible not to respect them. I didn't like the mathematics teacher though; mathematics was quite a pain for me! I remember one time the Romanian literature and language teacher said to my colleagues, after a term paper: 'Shame on

you, girls, two foreign students wrote better about Romanian literature and language than you!' She was talking about my sister and me. I made friends with most of my classmates, no matter their religion, but mostly with the ones who were well brought up.

We didn't have time to make friends outside school: we were busy with private lessons. Our parents thought it would be necessary for us. We took violin, piano, German and French lessons every week from the age of six. I studied violin in Bucharest with a teacher from the conservatory, but I was no good, I was merely squeaking the violin and tormenting my ears. I liked the piano better, so when we came to Brasov, I took it up instead. I studied the piano until I went to college; I loved it. We had a good cottage piano in the house, which sounded like a real piano. And with all the work around the house, there wasn't much time for socializing except school. We sometimes went to the cinema; we were allowed to go once a week: we saw musical movies, about Schubert's life and the like. My parents had to know what we would watch and had to approve first.

We went on holidays with our parents, to Tusnad, Borsec [town in North- Eastern Romania in Harghita county, in the intramontane depression of the same name in the Eastern Carpathians with numerous springs of mineral waters], or Sfantu-Gheoghe, and we stayed for about two weeks. Youth camps weren't in fashion back then, but when we were older, our parents let us go alone to Tusnad, to stay at a landlady's. We were there all by ourselves, with the owner's children, and my father and mother would come only on weekends. We didn't go to eat out much in Brasov, and when we did it was only with our parents. Saturdays were always spent at home with our parents.

I always got along very well with my sister Alice, but our temperaments were very different. She was a beautiful child, and therefore rather spoiled. She was everyone's darling, and she took advantage of that. I spoiled her too; and as the elder sister, I had to give her attention and support. For example, she spent all her free time reading. She didn't have much of a dexterity, so I did things for her, like wrapping her books, cleaning her shoes, sewing her clothes; all this time she was reading. Mother got upset, she told her she had to learn how to do things as well, but she didn't; she knew she could count on me. I didn't mind helping her like this, if I had, I wouldn't have done it. I was very attached to her. Even nowadays, we take care of each other, we even exaggerate: when one of us had family problems, we tried to keep it from the other as long as we could, so that we wouldn't disturb the other's life with personal problems. We hardly ever fought. She was snappier and more stubborn than me as a child, but I usually gave in because I didn't want to fight. We only had a few discussions.

After high school, Alice and I went to college in Bucharest, where we studied medicine [dentistry]. Those six years were hard and we had to study a lot. We didn't stay in the hostel; we rented a place because our parents wanted us to have the best conditions to study. And we did: we studied all week, Saturdays until 6 o'clock in the evening, and on Sundays until 3 in the afternoon. Back then college wasn't as much fun as it seems to be today with cars, going out, discos and the like.

During college we always fasted on Yom Kippur, but it was very hard because we had lectures we couldn't miss. We had no contact with the Jewish community in Bucharest, none at all, we didn't know how many Jewish colleagues we had, and there were definitely some. I didn't know until late that the state of Israel had been formed. During college we were members of UTC [Young Communists' Union]; we couldn't get out of it because we were good students.

Grandfather died in 1955 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery here, in Brasov. Back then, there was still a rabbi here, Rabbi Deutsch, so he was present, and my father recited the Kaddish.

In 1957 my father's practice was nationalized [see nationalization in Romania] 11. He had to give all his tools to a co-op, and he had to start working there, as an employee. But he could hardly work anymore, he was already very shattered by losing his life's work. Then followed another blow: the authorities took his gold. In that period, 1955-1957, the state's treasury was empty as a result of the war, so the police forced whomever they suspected to have gold reserves - like doctors, dentists, lawyers, jewelers - to hand it over. Most of these people had gold, and after being threatened and tortured, they handed it in. One day, when my father was working at the co-op, a policeman came and took him to the headquarters, for some 'information'. There he was told to hand in his gold; of course father refused to, but they said, 'We know you have gold, your elder brother left you some when he left for the USA'. I don't think they knew that from somebody in particular, like an informer, but it wasn't very hard to guess because dentists used gold as a raw material for dental purposes. And my father came from a family of dentists, so the conclusion wasn't hard to reach.

I was in my third year at university, and I was at home at the time - I was sick. So one time father didn't come home for lunch, and we were worried. We called the police and found out he was there, for some 'information'. He only came home the next morning with two policemen. They sat in one room, while my father went up into the attic and brought all the gold, 120 grams, and a few family jewels that were in the house, which my mother wore daily. They took all, made a report, and then took with them two precious carpets as well, and a radio, as a 'punishment'.

My father confessed after all: he was threatened and he didn't want to be tortured. And they had terrible methods of torture: people were beaten, kept in freezing cold water up to their waist for days, or they were given freezing cold showers followed quickly by hot showers; it was insupportable. Plus, they forced people to listen to tapes on which they had recorded the screams of others who had been tortured, and all that went on until you confessed. After they took his gold, my father was sentenced to one year and four months imprisonment for illegal possession of gold. He didn't go to prison right away because he had a nervous breakdown and was committed to a mental hospital. He was desperate, felt he had lost everything: his practice, his work, his gold. He had no means to survive. After he came out of hospital, he went to prison. That was in 1960, but he only did four months because some sort of pardon was introduced and he was allowed to go home. He never worked after that.

After we graduated, my sister remained in a commune near Bucharest to work, and she married a Jew named Silviu Raphael, who worked as an engineer. They have a son, Radu, who is a telecommunication technician. They are not very religious. My sister never observed the tradition much, except going to the synagogue on the high holidays.

After graduation I left for Balan mines [cupriferous mines, located in Harghita county, 89 km from Brasov]. I chose that location because I had good grades and I could choose from several places: it wasn't the best, but it was the closest to Brasov I could find. I never, but never, had problems at work because I was Jewish. All my colleagues at Balan mines were Hungarian, we were all young and got along like brothers. We were very isolated in that commune, almost everyone came from other places, and the conditions were very harsh: cold, not a lot of food, and very hard work. We

had to go deep into the mines when there were accidents, when vaccination was needed. Everybody had almost the same life style.

I met my husband, Iuliu Adler, in Bucharest in 1966; a common acquaintance introduced us. He was born in Buzau in 1935. I only met his mother, Rebecca, a very friendly person, because his father, Jacques Adler, had already died. His mother was a housewife, but I don't know what his father did for a living; he died nine years before I met my husband. I don't know what their situation was during World War II. Iuliu was the only child and he studied electrotechnics in Bucharest. My husband worked as an engineer, but he had no political views, and he wasn't a member of the Communist Party. He was more interested in work, in trips, and the like. As a coincidence, he was a colleague of my sister's husband, Silviu Raphael.

We got married in 1966 in Brasov, but although he was Jewish, we didn't have a religious wedding. Iuliu wasn't religious at all. He didn't grow up in a Jewish environment, and almost all his friends were Christians. So we only had the civil marriage ceremony and a small party for the family at a restaurant. Iuliu didn't observe any kind of Jewish holiday, but I urged him to. So we would observe at home whatever I had set my mind to. In 1966, when I got married, I went to work in Prejmer [village in Brasov county, 25 km from Brasov], which was much closer to Brasov. I lived with my husband in my parents' house in Brasov, and I was commuting every day to Prejmer. In Prejmer I was in charge of the stomatology department. In the first years of our marriage, my husband and I were able to go on small trips with our friends, a few close families, to celebrate anniversaries and so on, but after that, it wasn't possible anymore because my husband fell ill, and so did my parents.

It wasn't hard for my family to keep in touch with relatives abroad: there were my father's brothers who had left for Israel and the USA and their children. But my father never wrote about politics; he wasn't interested in that. He only wrote about family matters. Our family wanted to leave for Israel as well, in 1962, when my sister and I graduated from college. We filed the emigration papers, but we were rejected. Soon after that, my father fell ill, my mother fell ill, and then my husband's health got worse. So we gave up the idea of emigrating; it simply wasn't possible with so many sick people.

I didn't agree with a lot of things that were unjust during communism. I was upset about the nationalization, like what happened with father's practice, who was a decent, hard-working man and didn't steal from anybody. There was no freedom to travel or send letters abroad, especially between 1970 and 1980. And to speak freely about the system, you could have been incarcerated for. I didn't understand these laws. I loved my country, and I couldn't see how my traveling abroad could harm the state's safety. I did travel to Israel during communism, but it was difficult to go, and I couldn't take my husband with me. They assumed that we wouldn't come back. Pregnant women had to work night shifts, or to work in toxic environments; abortion was prohibited, and most women were absolutely terrified by this law. All these laws were harmful for the population.

When I started to work, I had to join the Communist Party. I didn't want to because I still had hopes that we would emigrate; I tried to postpone it as long as I could, but finally I had no choice. On anniversary celebrations of 23rd August 1944 12 or Labor Day, 1st May, I didn't have to participate in marches; Prejmer was a small place, we only had party meetings on special occasions, the marching was done by the workers in Brasov. But I did participate in marches when I was a student

and in UTC; then it was compulsory.

I didn't listen to Radio Free Europe 13 during communism, but that was because I simply didn't have the time. I would have liked to be up to date with the events, but I was so busy with work, with taking care of my family, that I had no time left for myself. With all the hardships, the traditions weren't observed anymore in the house. I was a party member, and I was a bit afraid that it could cause me more troubles. I never forgot about God all this time, He was in my heart. But the times were too hard and I didn't have the energy to observe traditions. I provided for my family for almost 28 years.

Living conditions were hard during communism: at work, in the practice. Many times there was no electricity, so we couldn't work; also, when I was on duty during the night, on Sundays, or even during the week, as a general practitioner, not as a dentist, I was sometimes needed for an emergency: I had to walk two or three kilometers in the field from the hospital to some house where the patient was - and houses were scattered in Prejmer, there were big distances between some of them - in total darkness, with no flashlight, and I could barely see my next step. I was also upset by the lack of electricity at home: I couldn't read, I couldn't study for my profession. Each household had a share of gas that had to be enough for one month, but of course it never was. There were stamps for food, but everybody had to find something on the black market to have enough. For example, we knew somebody from a pig breeder, who would sell us a 100 kilo pig in fall that we had slaughtered, so that we would have food for the following year.

My husband died in 1976, my father in 1979 and my mother in 1987. They were all buried in the Jewish cemetery here, in Brasov. I asked the community to send for a rabbi from Bucharest to be present at the funerals. I sat shivah after my husband died, and after my parents as well.

I went to the synagogue during communism, but only on the high holidays: I wasn't hiding it, but I couldn't go more often because of the personal problems I had at home. My parents went to the synagogue as well on the high holidays, for as long as they could. I was a bit worried about what would happen if this came out in the party circles, but then I reckoned that religion wasn't forbidden, and moreover, the Securitate had plenty of informers present when the celebration took place in the synagogue. I don't know concrete examples, but everybody in the community knew that it was common practice. On each high holiday, some unknown people, usually men, came to the synagogue, people we knew weren't part of the community and were there for one purpose alone: to find out if we were talking against the system. So I figured that they already knew we weren't doing anything the like and stopped worrying.

I was worried about the wars in Israel. [Edita is referring to the Six-Day- War 14 and the Yom Kippur War 15] I had friends and family there, but fortunately none of them were affected by the wars. I have been to Israel three times: in 1974, in 1982 and in 1993. In 1974 I wanted to go with my husband, to visit my aunt Klara. But only I could go; we planned that he would go next, but when I came back, his cancer started aggravating, so it wasn't possible. During the month I was there, I visited my friends as well. I was very impressed with the family life there, by their gatherings on Friday evenings, on Saturdays. One time, on Yom Kippur, there was a commemoration of Israel's Independence Day [Yom Hazmaut]. When the alarm went off, everybody, all the population, stopped and prayed for a few minutes. I was in Holon, at my aunt's house, and from a window I could see into a school's courtyard. Even the kids, and they were small, stood still. I also visited the

Holocaust Museum [Yad Vashem] 16, the scrolls from the Dead Sea [in Jerusalem, at the Israel National Museum's Shrine of the Book] the Dead Sea, the Masada.

After my husband died, it was a bit too late for me to move to Israel. I was too old. Dentistry was more advanced there, I would have needed to study for two years at least to catch up, and then I would have needed some money to open a practice. I was 50 years old already, and moreover, I didn't want to leave my sister and her family behind.

At the beginning of 1989, a year and a half after my mother passed away, George Trif moved in with me. I met him in 1988: my phone was out of order, so I called the telephone company and asked them to send somebody to fix it, and he was the one who came. Then he came again to see if the phone was working. He asked me if he could visit me again, and finally I said yes. He came to visit a few times, and then he suggested that we became friends. I was totally against it, I thought he was a young man - he is 16 years younger than me - and that it was improper. But he kept on visiting and bringing me flowers. On the other hand it was very hard for me to live alone, I was alone on the entire floor, if I needed anything, if I happened to fall, nobody would have heard me crying for help. We are not married, but we live together and we get along very well.

When the revolution started in December 1989 [see Romanian Revolution of 1989] 17, I was going to work. I arrived in Prejmer, it was a Thursday, and on the fortress [Prejmer fortress, built in the 14th century] wall was written: 'Down with Ceausescu 18!', and there were two people from the city hall trying to erase that. I had no idea what was going on; I was in mourning after my mother. I found out when the nurse told me at work. She and her husband were listening to [Radio] Free Europe and they knew it would happen. I was taken by surprise, absolutely by surprise. So when the shootings started, I was at home, but George was in the house as well and I wasn't so afraid. But you could hear them so loud and close, I thought the roof would come down on me. In front of the house, at the corners, there were tanks. At first I didn't know what was going on, but then I heard people shouting: 'Down with Ceausescu!', so I figured it must be some kind of popular uprising.

After the revolution life changed for the better. There is a spiritual freedom, a freedom to speak your mind, and, of course, to travel. But most importantly: you don't have to watch your back when you open your mouth.

I retired in 1990. I became more involved in the Jewish community about two years ago, when president Tiberiu Roth insisted that the women should come to the minyan on Saturdays. I also take part in meetings, when people from the communities in other cities come. This September [2003] I participated in a seminar in Oradea, dealing with the problems of the old Jews. I help voluntarily wherever my help is needed: I helped with the community's library when it was first opened two years ago. I spend the rest of my time with the housekeeping, each Thursday I go to symphonic concerts, and I go on trips on Sunday to Dambul Morii [small holiday location 5 km from Brasov] or Predeal [famous holiday and winter resort, 26 km from Brasov] with George. But most of the time I spend reading because I want to catch up and read everything I didn't have time to read before. I read literature, history, and about Judaism because now I can find books that weren't available before.

Glossary:

1 Neolog Jewry

Following a Congress in 1868/69 in Budapest, where the Jewish community was supposed to discuss several issues on which the opinion of the traditionalists and the modernizers differed and which aimed at uniting Hungarian Jews, Hungarian Jewry was officially split into to (later three) communities, which all built up their own national community network. The Neologs were the modernizers, who opposed the Orthodox on various questions.

2 Karlsbad (Czech name

Karlovy Vary): The most famous Bohemian spa, named after Bohemian King Charles (Karel) IV, who allegedly found the springs during a hunting expedition in 1358. It was one of the most popular resorts among the royalty and aristocracy in Europe for centuries.

3 Keren Kayemet Leisrael (K

K.L.): Jewish National Fund (JNF) founded in 1901 at the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel. From its inception, the JNF was charged with the task of fundraising in Jewish communities for the purpose of purchasing land in the Land of Israel to create a homeland for the Jewish people. After 1948 the fund was used to improve and afforest the territories gained. Every Jewish family that wished to help the cause had a JNF money box, called the 'blue box'. They threw in at least one lei each day, while on Sabbath and high holidays they threw in as many lei as candles they lit for that holiday. This is how they partly used to collect the necessary funds. Now these boxes are known worldwide as a symbol of Zionism.

4 KuK (Kaiserlich und Koeniglich) army

The name 'Imperial and Royal' was used for the army of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, as well as for other state institutions of the Monarchy originated from the dual political system. Following the Compromise of 1867, which established the Dual Monarchy, Austrian emperor and Hungarian King Franz Joseph was the head of the state and also commander-in-chief of the army. Hence the name 'Imperial and Royal'.

5 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, Partium, 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 - as a reward for the fact that Romania formed the first communist-led government in the region.

6 Anti-Jewish laws in Romania

The first anti-Jewish laws were introduced in 1938 by the Goga-Cuza government. Further anti-Jewish laws followed in 1940 and 1941, and the situation was getting gradually worse between 1941- 1944 under the Antonescu regime. According to these laws all Jews aged 18- 40 living in villages were to be evacuated and concentrated in the capital town of each county. Jews from the region between the Siret and Prut Rivers were transported by wagons to the camps of Targu Jiu, Slobozia, Craiova etc. where they lived and died in misery. More than 40,000 Jews were moved. All rural Jewish property, as well as houses owned by Jews in the city, were confiscated by the state, as part of the 'Romanisation campaign'. Marriages between Jews and Romanians were forbidden from August 1940, Jews were not allowed to have Romanian names, own rural properties, be public employees, lawyers, editors or janitors in public institutions, have a career in the army, own liquor stores, etc. Jewish employees of commercial and industrial enterprises were fired, Jewish doctors could no longer practice and Jews were not allowed to own chemist shops. Jewish students were forbidden to study in Romanian schools.

7 Legionary

Member of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, also known as the Legionary Movement, founded in 1927 by C. Z. Codreanu. This extremist, nationalist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic movement aimed at excluding those whose views on political and racial matters were different from theirs. The Legion was organized in so-called nests, and it practiced mystical rituals, which were regarded as the way to a national spiritual regeneration by the members of the movement. These rituals were based on Romanian folklore and historical traditions. The Legionaries founded the Iron Guard as a terror organization, which carried out terrorist activities and political murders. The political twin of the Legionary Movement was the Totul pentru Tara (Everything for the Fatherland) that represented the movement in parliamentary elections. The followers of the Legionary Movement were recruited from young intellectuals, students, Orthodox clericals, peasants. The movement was banned by King Carol II in 1938.

8 Securitate (in Romanian

DGSP - Directia generala a Securitatii Poporului): General Board of the People's Security. Its structure was established in 1948 with direct participation of Soviet advisors named by the NKVD. The primary purpose was to 'defend all democratic accomplishments and to ensure the security of the Romanian Popular Republic against plots of both domestic and foreign enemies'. Its leader was Pantelimon Bondarenko, later known as Gheorghe Pintilie, a former NKVD agent. It carried out the arrests, physical torture and brutal imprisonment of people who became undesirable for the leaders of the Romanian Communist Party, and also kept the life of ordinary civilians under strict observation.

9 Transnistria

Area situated between the Bug and Dniester rivers and the Black Sea. The term is derived from the Romanian name for the Dniester (Nistru) and was coined after the occupation of the area by German and Romanian troops in World War II. After its occupation Transnistria became a place for deported Romanian Jews. Systematic deportations began in September 1941. In the course of the next two months, all surviving Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina and a small part of the Jewish population of Old Romania were dispatched across the Dniester. This first wave of deportations reached almost 120,000 by mid-November 1941 when it was halted by Ion Antonescu, the Romanian dictator, upon intervention of the Council of Romanian Jewish Communities. Deportations resumed at the beginning of the summer of 1942, affecting close to 5,000 Jews. A third series of deportations from Old Romania took place in July 1942, affecting Jews who had evaded forced labor decrees, as well as their families, communist sympathizers and Bessarabian Jews who had been in Old Romania and Transylvania during the Soviet occupation. The most feared Transnistrian camps were Vapniarka, Ribnita, Berezovka, Tulcin and Iampol. Most of the Jews deported to camps in Transnistria died between 1941-1943 because of horrible living conditions, diseases and lack of food.

10 Antonescu, Ion (1882-1946)

Political and military leader of the Romanian state, president of the Ministers' Council from 1940 to 1944. In 1940 he formed a coalition with the Legionary leaders. From 1941 he introduced a dictatorial regime that continued to pursue the depreciation of the Romanian political system started by King Carol II. His strong anti- Semitic beliefs led to the persecution, deportation and killing of many Jews in Romania. He was arrested on 23rd August 1944 and sent into prison in the USSR until he was put on trial in the election year of 1946. He was sentenced to death for his crimes as a war criminal and shot in the same year.

11 Nationalization in Romania

The nationalization of industry and natural resources in Romania was laid down by the law of 11th June 1948. It was correlated with the forced collectivization of agriculture and the introduction of planned economy.

12 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.

13 Radio Free Europe

Radio station launched in 1949 at the instigation of the US government with headquarters in West Germany. The radio broadcast uncensored news and features, produced by Central and Eastern European émigrés, from Munich to countries of the Soviet block. The radio station was jammed behind the Iron Curtain, team members were constantly harassed and several people were killed in terrorist attacks by the KGB. Radio Free Europe played a role in supporting dissident groups, inner resistance and will of freedom in the Eastern and Central Europen communist countries and thus it

contributed to the downfall of the totalitarian regimes of the Soviet block. The headquarters of the radio have been in Prague since 1994.

14 Six-Day-War

The first strikes of the Six-Day-War happened on 5th June 1967 by the Israeli Air Force. The entire war only lasted 132 hours and 30 minutes. The fighting on the Egyptian side only lasted four days, while fighting on the Jordanian side lasted three. Despite the short length of the war, this was one of the most dramatic and devastating wars ever fought between Israel and all of the Arab nations. This war resulted in a depression that lasted for many years after it ended. The Six-Day-War increased tension between the Arab nations and the Western World because of the change in mentalities and political orientations of the Arab nations.

15 Yom Kippur War

The Arab-Israeli War of 1973, also known as the Yom Kippur War or the Ramadan War, was a war between Israel on one side and Egypt and Syria on the other side. It was the fourth major military confrontation between Israel and the Arab states. The war lasted for three weeks: it started on 6th October 1973 and ended on 22nd October on the Syrian front and on 26th October on the Egyptian front.

16 Yad Vashem

This museum, founded in 1953 in Jerusalem, honors both Holocaust martyrs and 'the Righteous Among the Nations', non-Jewish rescuers who have been recognized for their 'compassion, courage and morality'.

17 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.

18 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.