

RG-50.031.0034

Margaret Szmuk Kola, b. Sighet Marmatiei, Romania, religious home, parents, 6 brothers, 2 sisters; cattle business & horse cortege for Gentile funerals; all-girl schooling; rumors coming from Poland but locals were in denial, "It won't be here. It won't be here."; anti-semitic taunts, repeatedly hearing "Evreu!" ("Jew" in Romania); "brother taken away (to Poland) - not only him... all those boys" (that had been in Zionist organizations); uncle's farm & father's businesses confiscated (1942); ghetto - "no work, only vegetating"; earlier, Father had sent Margaret to a convent to learn to sew but during invasion, the sewing machine father had given her, confiscated; Margaret's fiancé (carpenter) called into Army to pick up mines (killed); sister survived war but died right after liberation because "She said, she had no one to go home to," sister's fiancé also killed in Army; 3-day cattle car transport to Auschwitz; Margaret endured nose injury from burning coal thrown at her (black scar remained), Nazis pulling on beards of Jewish men; at Auschwitz, "taking children by feet, slamming them against cable cars...I'm not a happy person - when I go to sleep, I see it like a whole movie...seeing the flames - told, 'Your parents are burning there.'"; Margaret & sisters not tortured (Margaret later discloses that they were protected by an old Nazi officer who was against war, who said at liberation, he "would kill himself"); Margaret/sisters forced labor in administration, "We make the numbers (tattoos)..cars backed up, (prisoners) taken to gas chambers," sorting shoes; march out of Auschwitz to Bergen-Belsen (many die in march); liberation, Margaret so sick, "My mind didn't work"; saw "mountains of bodies - sun shining...I collapse & I wake up in Sweden" (3 mos. in coma, woke up with pleurisy, temporary amnesia); recuperation facility (needlepoint, Jewish organization assistance); education (nursing, languages); marriage & couple's immigration to Chicago 1952; prospering in America, three children; Margaret closes by shares her mixed emotions on being Jewish.