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Summary

Josefina "Finnie" Rosner (née Rosen) born on September 27, 1924 in Vienna, Austria; only child to parents Mayer & Sonya (Sophie), father's parents from Bukovina lived with them, family spoke Russian & German; father oral surgeon; mother (from Moldova), one of 6 daughters, all graduated from school, Finnie's mother becomes a nurse; lived in spacious apt in the 2nd district of Vienna in a maid's room, father's medical office in home; Finnie, very close to grandfather; grandmother & her sister only two of their siblings (10 in all) to survive the Holocaust; family observant, Finnie's favorite holiday Passover, home not kosher; Finnie receives Jewish training; antisemitism endured, her embarrassment lying that she wasn't Jewish so she could play with the other girls; Finnie's dreams of becoming a doctor; family self-identified as "secular Jewish"; discussion on Christian Socialists/Austrian-Nazis; studying French & Latin, Vienna's rich cultural life, seeing the opera *Tannhäuser*, attending Burgtheater having to walk on opposite side of street as non-Jewish friend; discussion Austrian & German national anthem sharing same melody; witnessing grandfather chase kids that tried to push him off park bench; attending all-girl school, favorite Jewish teachers start disappearing; later learning of friends shot by the Nazis, had been pushed into pits; seeing Sturm Abteilung marching down street, trucks picking up people, recalling terror, others were forced to scrub sidewalks; a maid alerts Nazis to Finnie's mother being Jewish because maid didn't feel she was being paid enough, mother arrested but miraculously let go due to man behind desk being a patient of her husband; border closed but through American & Austrian Embassies, family able to flee August 28, 1938; friends had been sent to Gurs internment camp; family had to relinquish apt & possessions with exception 10 marks per person; Jewish dept store had been burned to ground; train station, sad memory of grandfather waving goodbye to them (grandfather later died of a stroke 1940); arriving to Swiss border, mother & Finnie taken to different part of train, disrobed to make sure they were not taking items with them, once past Swiss border, father shouts expletives at Nazis behind them; reaching Paris; boarding Queen Mary, arriving to N.Y., seeing Statue of Liberty; father's half-brother takes them to get ice cream float, Finnie's surprise Americans spoil good ice cream with soda pop; arriving to Chicago, one bedroom apt, enters elementary school not able to speak English, enduring antisemitism from Amer teacher; finding work, mother sells hosiery, father in friend's factory as medic, Finnie baby-sits; marriage; parents move to NY, father develops dementia, dies at Harlem Hospital; 1939 correspondence stops from Vienna friends; Finnie graduates from college, becomes high school English teacher, teaches at Hyde Park High & Near North Metro Career Center; husband Larry Rosen (civil-engineer American-born), three children, "My biggest accomplishment is they like each other," 2 grandchildren, 3 great-grandchildren; returns to Austria several times; most close friends in Vienna had been killed; year later, still feeling as if she is European; biggest lesson from the Holocaust, "It can happen anywhere."; discussion on hate speech; in Israel, visiting Western Wall for first time & surprising herself, involuntarily writing in German instead of English; photographs of family, their Vienna apt, few artifacts they were able to get out of Vienna (includes needlepoint work) & Finnie's own work as a talented artist.