

Interview with Mrs. Edith Goodman
By Maddy Braufman
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Jewish Community Relations Council, Anti-Defamation League
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HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY TAPING PROJECT

Q: This is Maddy Braufman and we're recording an interview with Edith Goodman. Edith, do you want to tell me what your full name was when you were born?

A: Edith Fuhrmann Brandmann.

Q: And where were you born?

A: I was born in a little town in Romania. It was called Krischatik and it was right on the border with Poland. The river Dnestr divided Krischatik from a bigger town in Poland, Zalischik.

Q: So then you were born in Romania. And how long did you live there?

A: In that little town, I was born in 1931, and till 1941 I was in that little town. I stayed there until we were deported.

Q: What kind of business, or what was your father's profession?

A: My father was a landowner. They had a big ranch and they also had a grocery store. That was my mother's hobby -- the grocery store. We had land. And right across the street from us was a big beet sugar factory. And we used to grow white sugar beets. Also we had lots of cattle, because they fed it what was left from the end (after the) sugar.

Q: Were your grandparents or your parents from Romania, also?

A: Yes.

Q: And what about your grandparents?

A: Well only my grandmother on my mother's side lived about a mile away from us with her other daughter and her family. And my grandfather on my father's side lived in a bigger city, in Chadnovig.

Q: What were your grandparents' names? On your mother's side?

A: On my mother's side was Rachel-Rocholeah.

Q: And her last name?

A: Wolf.

Q: And what about your grandparents on your father's side?

A: My father's was Ephraim Fuhrmann. And because he was not legally married to his wife -- was just with a Jewish ceremony --that's why my father had the name of Brandmann. And so there were two names. And in school I was called Brandmann, but everybody knew us as Fuhrmann. The older people they didn't get married in city hall --just with the rabbis.

Q: But you see, now that's interesting, because next month, in December, they're going to do a Jewish ceremony for the Russians because all they ever had was a civil ceremony. And I think that to be legally married, as a Jew, you have to have a Jewish wedding.

A: Yeah.

Q: When you lived at home, what languages did you speak?

A: We spoke Yiddish and German. And we had a Ukrainian maid, and I spoke Ukrainian with the maid. And Romanian I started to speak only when I started school.

Q: It's interesting. You know I said my mother came from Romania, and a lot of what I've learned about Europe came from her -- and how they lived. And she came over when she was just a young child, so she doesn't remember all that much, but her mother used to tell her. Did you have a religious home?

A: Yes, it was a traditional home, because everybody lived that way. Everybody kept kosher. Nobody rode on Shabbos because nobody had cars, but it was a traditional home. My father put on tallis and tefillin every morning.

Q: Was there a synagogue or a temple or a shul?

A: Yeah. We built a synagogue. As a small child -- I was just reminiscing this year - - we built a synagogue that my father donated the land for it. And it was right there in our back yard. There was no rabbi. They used to come a shochet from another little town, very nice synagogue.

Q: Were there quite a few people who came in then for services, like on Shabbat?

A: Yes. There were about ten or fifteen Jewish families. Then there were also Jewish people that used to come occasionally to that sugar beet factory when it

was in session, when it was working in the fall. In the summertime it was closed, but in the fall, when the sugar beets would come in...

Q: You had to produce the sugar.

A: Yes. And then they used to bring in Jewish people that did not live there all the time.

Q: Was there any Zionist movement at that time there, or did your father feel anything about Palestine?

A: I don't remember. I can remember that there was a doctor in our little town and it must have been before the Russians came, '38, 39, and he decided to go to Israel. He kept on telling my father that he should give up everything -- things in the world are not good --and go to Israel. And my father said, "How can I leave everything!" I mean he built everything what we had up from his own two hands.

Q: When you were in Paris?

A: When I was in Paris this last summer, my father was just remembering that when they came to Israel the first time, they met the wife of the doctor that left for Israel, on the beach in Tel Aviv. Her husband had died, but she was still in Israel, and that's how we came to talk again about how he wanted to convince my father to go to Palestine that time.

Q: Tell me, how many brothers and sisters did you have?

A: I have a sister and a brother.

Q: Where are they?

A: My sister lives in Israel -- in Tel Aviv.

Q: What is her name?

A: Martha Sternberg. And my brother Jacob lives in Paris.

Q: And his name is Jacob Fuhrmann?

A: Fuhrmann. He dropped the Brandmann.

Q: Whereabouts in Paris does he live?

A: They lived in the 19 Calendismound. It's a middle class area. It's not far from downtown. They have a beautiful park nearby and...

Q: Is that near the Rothschild synagogue?

A: No. It's near the Rothschild hospital. They have a day school right nearby -- the Baron de Hirsch day school, and also the synagogue there where my niece attended.

Q: You go to see them occasionally?

A: I go twice a year since my mother has been sick. She had a stroke five years ago.

Q: Your father's still living?

A: Yeah.

Q: And they live in Paris?

A: In Paris, yes.

Q: When did they come to Paris?

A: In 1950.

Q: All right. Let's go back a little bit, because you mentioned that the doctor said that things weren't good in the world, and your father should give up what he was doing and leave. When did your father or family first feel that there was something really wrong that was going to happen to the Jewish people in Romania?

A: Well, it started actually in 1940 when our area, the Bukovina, was occupied by the Russians. In 1939, I remember as a child, there were the first bombs that I ever heard, when there was the war between Russia and Poland and Germany. They wanted to bomb the bridges that the people were running away from Poland, and the bombs fell in our little town and about six or eight people got killed. That was my first recollection. And then the Russians occupied Zelishaket, the town across from where we lived. And then in 1940, one Friday morning, I remember waking up at my grandmother's house to find out that we were occupied by the Russians. And that's when it really started. They occupied Thursday night, and Friday, and on Saturday a group of officers and soldiers came to our house and my parents fed them, gave them challah and milk, served them food. And there was one Jewish officer that told my father, 'You should leave this -- everything -- and go away to a bigger city. Don't stay here, because things won't be good.' And again my father said, how can he leave the material things? And it was so true, because later on they started to deport the people that had some possessions to Siberia. And the war broke out and that was the reason why we were not deported. My parents were really happy to see the Romanians come back, because the same officers, the same people came back in 1941 that they left when

the Russians occupied us in '40, and now they thought that life will go on as before. But when my mother told one officer -- one official -- that they were so happy to see them back, he said, "Yeah, but we are not the same." And that's when we really saw that things are not good. They started to gather up the Jewish families and...they really didn't know what to do with us...

Q: How did your father decide what he was going to do? What made him change?

A: He didn't! it was decided for us. They just came one morning and told us they are taking us away to work on a farm -- on a big farm. I think he used to be the owner also of the sugar beet factory. And they said we were going to stay there.

Q: Was this in Romania that you were going?

A: Yeah. In Romania. I don't know how many miles away.

Q: You all went as a family?

A: We all went -- all the Jewish families.

Q: Could you take anything with you?

A: We took along the necessary possessions -- no furniture, but the pillows and clothes, and some pots and pans. And we got there. I remember that day. I cried. (Starts to cry.) I was a child. I left home and never went back. We came there, and we thought we were going to be there. But Saturday they gathered us up and we have to leave. They gathered us together and we have to leave and, "Where are you taking us?" And they said, "We don't know."

Q: Who were they?

A: The Romanians. The Romanian gendarme. And we were lucky because my father was nice once to the official, to that officer. When he first came to our district, (crying again), my father loaned him some money that he never returned. And that time, my mother walked up to this man, and she says, "You know? We were so nice to you and you promised you were going to help us. And look what you are doing to us." He said, "Well, there's nothing I can do." And the whole community -- and there was another community of Jewish people -- was assembled there. Just without anything! Whatever we took already from home to that farmhouse, we couldn't take along even that. So he said, "Well, there's nothing I can do." And as we were standing there, they were counting out names. All of a sudden he counted out our name and three other families' name, my parents and the children, and he said, "You're going to stay here and work. All the rest of them leave." And naturally there was a big commotion. Everybody got really desperate. And the other people left, and then he said, "You leave here." My father said, "Where shall I go?" He says, "I don't care. You go."

Because my father was always a very generous person, because of that he was known, and he knew some peasant, and he got a horse and wagon and we loaded up all the families and went away to a bigger town where the Jews were still at home.

Q: You remember the name of that town?

A: Sistagna. Yeah. I remember. And we got there, and the Jews were very nice to us, and they took us in, but then it wasn't legal to take us in, and then they put us in a school, and they said, "Well, we're going to do something so that you should remain here." When we started to get settled in, that Romanian officer that told us that we can leave, came there and told us in a completely changed voice, he says, "You ran away!" And he gathered us all up and took us back and we didn't know where! And we didn't know what happened to the other people! And about a week must have gone by -- I remember the Sabbath -- and it happened to be again a Saturday night -- when he took us away from this big city and he took us to a border town with Poland, a small village. And we came there and they searched the family and the few possessions that we had -- the whole night! We still didn't know what was going to happen to us. And in the morning they gathered us up and they said, "Come, you're going to go across the border!" And when they were bringing us -- I was a child, ten years old, but I can still remember this -- they showed us. "See? You go there, but you can never turn back your head! Because if you turn back, we have to shoot!" And what happened, usually we found this out there -- usually there was the Polish militia on the other side, wouldn't let the people come in, and they wouldn't let the people come back, and they started to shoot, and this is how they killed the Jewish people. And this is how my mother's sister and her family was killed. They showed us, "See? This is a fresh grave. If you're going to as much as turn back the heads, this is what is going to happen." That was a family of ten people, that my father happened to have known.

Q: You were saying that you couldn't look back, so how did you proceed then?

A: Well, again, it was just luck. And God was good to us. Because it was a Saturday night -- the ones that were watching the borders, the guards -- they were drinking all night. And instead of taking us to the border like at two or three o'clock at night, they took us -- it was already daylight. The Polish militia was waiting a whole night. They saw nobody came, so they went home. So that was our luck.

Q: You got in without them being there.

A: We got in a small town called Stetsova. My grandmother was with us. She had a brother-in-law there -- her sister had died and she thought she's going to go look for her brother-in-law -- but they were not there anymore. We came into the village and the militia got wind that we are there so they came and they wanted to take us back. And we knew if they were going to take us back to that border, we

were not going to be alive. We ended up being about 27 people in our group, or thirty people, because another group from the one Saturday evening that we were separated from, they told that officer that let us go, they were threatening him, "Look, you let them go and we want to stay here too!" And that's why he came after us. Because he was afraid that these people are going to tell on him. And when they brought us together with this group, my father told these militias, "If you have a right to shoot us, shoot us. Kill us here, but we're not going back." And I remember, I was being teased, all the years I was growing up, by one man, how I said to my father, "Give them everything. I want to live." It was a very confused time. One town was occupied by Romanian, one town was occupied by Hungarian, one was by German. When we came in, the Polish militia wanted to take us back, but we were lucky. The next town was occupied by Hungarian soldiers, and there were two ladies in our group that spoke Hungarian and somehow that Hungarian patrol, they came and they saw us there, and they ordered the Polish militia to bring us to the town where they occupied. And we walked. Again, I don't know the distances, but we walked a good day. It was a very hot July day, and we had little knapsacks of two dresses and something, and I remember my sister bending down. There was a little water on the road -- she was thirsty -- and she just bent down and she drank it, because there was nothing else. There was one nice man that saw what was happening -- Polish man -- and he saddled his horses and wagon and came after us, and he loaded up the kids and he drove us into town.

Q: He wasn't part of the militia.

A: No. He was just a peasant. A citizen of that little town.

Q: So then you went to this town that was occupied by the Hungarians.

A: And the Jews were still at home.

Q: What was the name of that town? Do you remember?

A: Snitin.

Q: Also in Poland?

A: Also in Poland. That was Galicia, and Galicia and Bukovina -- that was Austria once, and my father knew people from there. And the Jewish people there took us in and they fed us and they were really just wonderful to us.

Q: Weren't they worried about what was happening?

A: Nothing was happening yet there. And we were pleading with the authorities to let us stay there, but the Hungarians said, "No. You have to go back to Romania." And we were afraid what's going to happen. He said, 'No. We're going to send

you back legally and nothing's going to happen to you." So we had no way out and we went back to Romania. Unfortunately there were very few survivors of that little town, Snitin -- they were deported to the extermination camps later on...if we would have stayed there...

Q: Who knows what would have happened. So you went back to Romania. How long did you stay in that little town, though?

A: I don't remember. Must have been a couple of days.

Q: And then you went back to Romania. How did you go back? Who took you?

A: Also by horse and wagon.

Q: Did the militia go with you?

A: No. They gave us papers. They just took us to the border --the Hungarian patrol. And there were the Romanians, and they said this was very illegal. We were Romanian citizens. And then they sent us from one camp to another.

Q: They already had camps in Romania then.

A: Yeah. Not very well organized.

Q: Were these just for Jewish people?

A: Just Jewish people. They took us to a little town that also had a sugar beet factory, Luzah. And they put us in a school building there. And then from there they took us someplace else, and the whole summer, in 1941, we were driven from one place to another through Bessarabia. And when we were already coming through the villages, through the little towns in Bessarabia, the Jews were already gone. Many of them fled with the Russians -- when the Russians went back, when they went through --and many were killed. We ended up -- might have been August or the beginning of September --in a little town, Edintz, in Bessarabia. It was a very well known Jewish community, but we did not find any Jews at all. It must have still been warm, because they put 3,000 Jewish people in an empty field, just under the sky, just to sleep on the straw. And my mother and her cousin used to sneak out from the camp -- it wasn't electrified wire, it was just barbed wire -- and steal a few potatoes and make a soup. That's what we used to eat.

Q: They didn't provide any food for you?

A: Nothing.

Q: Did a lot of people die of starvation?

- A: A lot of people died. My father made acquaintance with a baker, and he used to take bread from him, and we used to sell it, and we used to earn a bread for us. Was very good bread! (laughter) I remember.
- Q: The baker was in the camp?
- A: No. it must have been in the little town, because they used to sneak out from the barbed wire, my father and my mother and her cousin. And I remember then bringing the potatoes and cooking them on straw, whatever. And then, when it started getting colder, they let us go and occupy the Jewish homes that were empty. My mother got sick and my sister got swollen legs and we were really down and out, and (laughter) whenever we were down and out, some miracle happened. My father happened to be walking and saw somebody that he knew from before that was sort of friendly with the Romanian authorities. His name was Heisner, and I happen to know a nephew of his that lives in New Jersey. And my father said to him, "Could you give me some money?" And he gave my father 500 lei, because my father's brother was still at home in Chernovitz and he said, "I'll get the money from your brother." And that really saved our life another time, because then right away we could buy food. Then he happened to come back, and my uncle had sent us money.
- Q: You were in contact with your family, in other words.
- A: We were not, but this fellow just saw us, and he went back and he told them. And my father's sisters and my father's brother who lived in Chernovitz and was still at home -- they sent us money. We were there until Succoth. And Succoth they picked us up again and then they sent us to Transnistria on foot and there were some wagons. Transnistria was the part of the Ukraine between the Dnestr and the Bug, I think. And as Romania and Germany occupied that part of the Ukraine, they brought the Jews there. Again, they didn't know what to do with them.
- Q: I noticed that you mentioned that you were in a camp called Lipcon. Was that after then?
- A: We were in Lipcon before we got to Edintz. All through that summer, wherever we thought that we got settled already someplace, something happened and the soldiers came in and, "Okay. Get up and go!" And in Lipcon we left many of our family pictures, wedding pictures, and even to this day, I don't think there are any pictures left of my mother's sister and her family. And from Edintz, as I said, we were in Transnistria. Many died in Edintz, and then they sort of gathered up like 40, 50 people, and they had like an overseer -- they called them "delegates" -- that would be in charge of that group, and our group picked my father, and he tried to get wagons for ones that couldn't walk. My sister couldn't walk. Then one night, before we had to cross the Dnestr, they gathered up all the delegates. And when

my mother saw that they are gathering all these men, she and other women started to run after them. They wanted to find out where they're being taken. She saw that one soldier turned around and killed the wife of one of these men. So she ran back to us. With us, besides my grandmother, was also my grandmother's brother Abraham, and he was very sick. He died that night. And my father always thought that if he would have been there, maybe he wouldn't have died yet, because he used to cover him up, and so on. My father was gone a whole night. We didn't know what had happened to them. Early morning, my father came back, and he said that they searched him and they searched him and they were questioning them and beating them, and then when it came to my father's turn, my father said to him, "Look what you're doing to us! I have a wife and a mother and three children and I left them all alone. Why did you take us away?" So the Romanian soldier looked at his hands and he said, "Oh, my hands are smeared with enough Jewish blood. Go back to your families!" Can you believe? These were the people that we lived among! They were our neighbors! We had two little knapsacks left with us, and two peasants came and grabbed them off our backs, took them away from us! We really came without nothing! My father had a warm coat, he used to cover us for the night in his warm coat, and he used to shiver. And when we came to Transnistria to a town, Mogilovedolsk, and there, too, the Jews were not there. The town happened to have been in a flood.

Q: Was it in...

A: This was in the Ukraine. That was like a dead town. The water was through, but the towns were empty. We went in and occupied a home -- us and a few more Jewish families. We made ourselves at home and we thought, "This is going to be it." The one possession that my father had saved was a pair of good shoes of my mother's. These shoes -- they were almost like brand new -- were in the pockets of his warm storm coat, and as he came into that house, he took out the shoes from the storm coat and spread out that coat and we should lie down. He was very good to us. If not for him, we wouldn't be here. (Starts to cry) And now later, the soldiers came. "Come on! It's not for you to stay here!" And they took us to a Casernah, where these soldiers are housed, just one great big building. There were many, many Jewish people there, and my father saw there are already people from Chernovitz, and he kept on asking about his family, and they said, "No, we haven't seen them." There was no communication. You couldn't call, you couldn't write. Just by what people had seen, one another. And my father puts his hands in the pockets of his coat, and he forgot the shoes! The next morning I don't remember seeing him leaving, but I remember waking up, and my father was gone to look for the shoes. My father told the guard that he lost a child, and would they please let him go look for the child. It was daylight, and it was more or less sunny and he walked back to that building and he found the shoes. And then he found out that some of the people from that building moved into the town. And he found out that every morning they count 400 people out of that place and they send them to other little villages in the Ukraine. The next two days he got acquainted and he bribed a guard, and he got us out from

that place and into the town. And again, a nice Jewish woman took us in. The house was practically destroyed from the flood, but she was there. I remember how she used to tell us day in and day out what her house used to look like. "And here were the end tables and here was the bed and here was this..." She had Kirmans, the carpets, and it was nice. And because, as I said, my father was very bright and alert, he started buying old clothes from people and sell them. So he right away organized some food for us. And then I got sick. I got rheumatic fever. I was so sick that if anybody walked by that bed, moved it, I was in pain. I was very sick. And he happened to meet a doctor that gave him some pills like aspirins and that sort of helped me. And also, because he was a very outgoing person, he happened to have been at the barber and started to tell where he's from, and how we got there, there was a man there that didn't look Jewish, but he said, "Did you say you're from Krischatik?" And my father said, yes. He says, "You know, in our little town that is called Chernovtsy, which is 30 miles away from Ogelov, there are some people from Krischatik." And my father sent them a note and this Jewish man came back and took us to that little town, and that was our salvation. That's where we lived out the war. We were there for three and a half years, and until we were freed by the Russians in March, '44. And again, the Jewish Russian people were very good to us! That's why, when they started to come here, I tried to be nice to some of them. It was a very nice little town, clean, and I had Jewish girlfriends, and we lived with the Jewish families and we didn't pay them a penny.

Q: You mentioned that it was a ghetto. Did you all have to live in one area?

A: We all lived in one area. And the first winter there, my father used to leave the little town with this man who brought us there. And my father used to carry on his back a sack of flour, in cold weather -- just like in Minnesota -- he used to go on foot. The 30 miles and would sell it in Mogilof, and all he earned was bread for us for the week. And my grandmother used to bake bread on Friday, and we used to get just a little piece. We used to eat bread and sugar. And that was our nourishment. And then they kept on saying that no Jews should leave that little town, and my father still used to sneak out until we heard that they caught three Jews and they killed them, and then my mother wouldn't let my father go anymore. It got to be spring, they had to clean. They don't have bathrooms, just big trenches. And they used to take the Jews to clean these. Some of them that had money didn't want to go, so my father used to. For a few mark, he used to go and do it for other people. I don't remember exactly how my father's sisters found out where we are, but they met somebody that was a Romanian official, he had a big job with the Romanian government, and they were governing that little town. My aunt was telling us that she practically kneeled in front of him, he should take money from us. And then there used to be Romanian officers that would go back and forth, and through him my father met others. So they helped us.

Q: Did your father's sisters stay in Romania in their own towns?

A: They stayed in their own town -- my father's three sisters and my father's brother. And my father's brother was also a very smart man. Even though there was a big propaganda carried on that the Jews that will leave first will get the nicer homes, and they will get the good jobs, my father's brother said, "I want to be the last Jew on the train that will leave Chernovitz. I won't leave any sooner." And he stayed, and then my father's sisters, somehow -- there was one good thing with the Romanians, you could bribe them -- somehow they stayed to work there. They probably did tell us the stories how they managed, but I don't remember.

Q: And they sent you money, so they must have been doing fairly well. Or still had money from before.

A: You know what they did? My father's sister -- one of the youngest -- was a dressmaker. She had a very well known salon in Chernovitz. And then two young men ran away from Poland when they started to deport the Jews, ran away to Chernovitz. They sneaked across the border, and they came and they didn't have any papers, and they needed a place to stay, and they were willing to pay. So my father's sisters took them in and they kept them for as long as they had money, and then they kept them without the money. My youngest aunt happened to marry one of these guys. He used to promise her, "Wait. When I'll get out of here I'll buy you furs and diamonds." And he kept his promise. They live in Vienna and he did very well. They have two daughters. So they kept them on even when they didn't have any more money to pay, just out of the goodness of their heart, even though it was very dangerous. So, we were there and then the Russians freed us, and I really have a very good heart about the Russian people, as such, because -- besides the Jewish people -- there were some very nice non-Jews that helped us. There was one woman that used to bring us potatoes and we used to sell her some little things, but she was very nice, and then the army was really nice to us, too, you know. They defended us. And then afterwards we came back home. We never went back to our little town. We went back to Chernovitz.

Q: You didn't go back to the place where you were born?

A: No. I've never been there.

Q: You don't know whether that little synagogue is still there?

A: No. My parents went back. They want to see what they can salvage. So they brought back a sack of flour from some neighbors! We were really afraid to go, because it happened in other little towns that Jewish people went back and the neighbors just killed them. They didn't want them back.

Q: It's very hard to believe that the people you lived with when you were children would be so hostile! Even if they knew that this was wrong!

- A: As a matter of fact, one lady that survived also from Transnistria -- I happen to have met her in St. Paul, Minnesota, she's died since -- her brother and his family went back. Their name was Dorff. They went back to that city -- a village not far from where we were from -- and they were killed, after the war. And then after the Russians came and liberated you, what happened?
- A: We went back home -- on foot or, when there was the Russian army, they used to take us on the trucks. I wouldn't remember the dates. We had accumulated a few possessions because, as you know, my auntie sent us the money, and we made it back home. And of course my father's sisters were there, and my father's brother, and they took us in. We stayed till '45 or '46.
- Q: The Jews weren't too happy there?
- A: No. Because it became really like Russia. The Jews were not happy and they started to leave. My father didn't want to leave again. He says, "I'm tired. I have a home. We're here, we have a roof over our head." And then something happened at his job. Some horses died. And my father was the one who used to buy the feed for the horses and they blamed it on my father. It's hard to imagine, but this is really what goes on. They arrested him during Passover to question him why these horses died, and what was that feed. Mainly why they kept him, they wanted, when he comes home, he should be an informer. And that he couldn't swallow. For months he wouldn't leave the house. And then my mother talked him into one day, "Let's go to a movie." And he came to the movie, and he saw that one of the ones that were questioning him was there, that had made him promise to become an informer. So that's when he decided to leave Russia. The Jews were leaving. And we ended up in Romania -- in Radauti.
- Q: Did you have to get papers to leave?
- A: Yes. We left legally. Again, they did not allow us to take anything, and they searched us.
- Q: How long did you stay in Romania?
- A: We stayed in Romania until like '58, I got married in Romania, in Radauti. And then I lived in another town with my husband. I just remember an incident with the Romanians. The Russians withdrew when the war broke out, and at first the Hungarians came and occupied that factory. They were very nice to us. Then the Romanians started to take over -- the people from before. We could see from our house right across the yard -- that sugar beet factory, and I remember my mother and my father staying and looking out the window the whole night. They didn't go to sleep. They didn't like the drinking that was going on. And, sure enough, in the morning towards dawn, my mother heard something, how the Hungarians were given an order, "Zhid,"..."all the Jews"...and that didn't sound good to her.

She understood here and there a word, and she gathered us up from the warm bed and we ran away in the fields and in the forest. And two minutes later she saw the soldiers marching up to the end of the little town and walking back the Jews there. They saw they were assembling these Jews, so they gathered us up, "Let's run away from home!" and some soldiers ran after us. They wanted to bring us there too. My sister was a very pretty girl. She was thirteen. And she had a little ring, and she took the ring off and gave it to him. And he let us go back home. And then, that Romanian captain that was there -- some of these people from our little town knew that Romanian captain. They started to plead with him, because first the Hungarians said, "Shall we kill you? Shall we slash your throats?" My mother's cousin started to plead with them and then they let them all go. And in the afternoon that Hungarian soldier came back and brought back that ring. He wanted a picture of my sister, that he should be able to show that he saved us, and he gave her back the ring.

Q: One of the things that I'm curious about, did you ever feel, before you had to leave your first town, that there was any anti-Semitism, or did you know many gentiles? Did you go to school with them?

A: Yes. I think I grew up with it. I just don't even remember when was the first time, but I remember. That little village, there were mostly Ukrainian people that lived there, and they always had derogatory remarks about "the Jews," and I just grew up with it. It was a part of my life.

Q: Did you ever fear them? Nothing ever happened in the community that would upset your family?

A: Not that I remember. Maybe my parents might have had, but I don't remember. But we really didn't associate very much. Just in school.

Q: Did you go to any kind of Hebrew school or...

A: No. we had a man, a Jewish melamed was hired, and we had a cheder. I used to go there or he used to come home and teach my brother and me. Also, while we were in concentration camp --there in that last little town where we were freed -- when we were doing a little better, we hired a man to teach us Hebrew, my brother and me, mainly. Somehow my sister got out of it. And they gave him like four kilos, eight pounds of flour a week. And that amount meant more at that time than I don't know how many thousands would mean now, because it meant he had bread! My father thought that we should get some kind of Hebrew education.

Q: Was your brother ever Bar Mitzvah?

A: When we came back, he was Bar Mitzvah, but it wasn't done the way it's done here. My father went with him to shul and the bottle of schnapps and honey cake

and he was Bar Mitzvah. My brother used to get mad, because somehow, when he would get stuck with a Hebrew word with the Chumash, I knew that word better. (laughter) So we always had to have a little Yiddish knowledge.

Q: When you were living in that last camp, before you went into the town, were they all Jews there? Were there any gentiles with you? Do you remember?

A: I think they were all Jews. I don't ever remember seeing non-Jews in the ghettos with us. Even when after was gentile neighbors, they were not part of the ghetto or whatever. They were free.

Q: I see. In the camps, were there people like gypsies, or Jews that were baptized, or that really weren't born Jewish, or that were just called Jews? These were really Jewish people, in other words, that were separated out.

A: Yeah.

Q: You mentioned that you were able to get money from your uncles and your aunts. Evidently then, the way in which your area was handled was different than where the Nazis were themselves. You never had any contact with Nazis as such?

A: We did. I think mostly when they started to withdraw from Russia. That's when we had contact with real German Nazis! But we were mostly under Hungarian and Romanian rule. And as I said, that was our luck, that you could bribe a Romanian. (Chuckle) We knew how to communicate with them. And we were Romanian citizens! There were many, many died! I don't know exactly the statistics, how many. I remember when we were being driven through little villages, and there used to be like three, four families. They were not there anymore. They just did not have the same way of exterminating as the Nazis. They had the same orders -- they wanted to get rid of us! But they were not quite as sophisticated and brutal. My father walked out once -- you had to wear a Jewish star -- and a Romanian soldier came to the door to ask something -- just for information --and saw he didn't have the Jewish star. He gave him a slap on his face. So they were pretty tough, too, but in a different way. We could still move around. There was still a market, the Ukrainian peasants used to bring things to the market things.

Q: When you went back to your home -- after you were liberated -- you were there until your parents decided they were going to leave after your father had that incident with the Russians. And you moved back into another town in Romania?

A: Yeah.

Q: And you were there until you got married, you said. Now when you got married, did you live there for a while after you were married too?

A: We lived in Romania in a different town. We got married in 1950. And we lived in Romania until '58.

Q: What made you decide to leave?

A: Well, my parents had left in 1950.

Q: What made them decide to go to France rather than to Israel?

A: Because my father's brother lived there.

Q: Oh. The brother that was in...

A: ...in Chernovitz. Everybody started to move away. My sister was in Israel. My brother was in Israel and my husband's sister was in Israel. We wanted to leave when they left, but we just didn't get the visa. And then later on, they started to let the Jews out again, so we got out.

Q: And then you decided to come right to the United States?

A: We stayed in Vienna, and really wanted to go to Israel -- till this day, I want to be together with my sister. But things were very tough in Israel then, and my aunties, my father's sisters, live in Vienna and they wanted us to stay there, and my parents were in Paris, and they would have liked us to come there. But you couldn't get an entrance visa to Paris. So Max, my husband, knew that he has family here so he just sent them a picture postcard --not even airmail! -- just a postcard that we left Romania, we are in Vienna, and we don't know yet what we are going to do. And right away we got a letter from Carl Sharpe and he wanted us to come here. He didn't know us. He just knew that Max was his cousin. He said, "You can work for me. And if you won't like working for me, you can find something else." And to us, that sentence that he wrote, "If you won't like working for me," seemed very strange. What does he mean he won't like it! I mean there was no such thing whether you like a job or you don't! (Laughter)

Q: Well, he probably didn't want you to feel obligated. And knowing Carl as I do, who I think is a very fine person, I can understand that he wanted you to be happy.

A: Sure. But to a European, that seemed strange, because that's what you have to do! You didn't ask yourself if you like it or you don't! So we came here and the family was really great to us.

Q: You came to the United States, then, to Minnesota. When?

A: In June of 1959.

- Q: June of 1959. Now your sister still lives in Israel? Is she well?
- A: She's well. She likes it.
- Q: Is she married?
- A: Yes. And she has two married daughters.
- Q: Where did she get married?
- A: She got married in Vienna. And then she left Vienna and she went to Israel, because my grandmother ended up in Israel. She was expecting her first baby, and she wanted to be with the grandmother.
- Q: Were there organizations that were Jewish that helped at all while you were in any of your camps?
- A: There might have been but we did not get. When we came back to Radauti we found out about the Joint Distribution. And I think we got, once, clothes from them. They said that this is still a fee, but you know, it's made out of paper. That was the only time. It must have been around '46 or so. I did, in Radauti, join the Zionist organizations. I belonged to the B'nai Akiva, which was the youth group of Mizrachi. And my brother belonged to Hashomer Hatzagair, which is just the opposite. (Laughter) My brother left for Israel in '47. He went with the youth group. He was in Cyprus. He was a very young boy, and he really wanted me to go with him. And my father said he doesn't think he could ever live without me. My sister had left for Vienna, and he says he would never let me from his side. As it turned out, we haven't been together. But then when my brother was in Israel, my parents settled in Paris. They wanted to have one child near them, so he came back to Paris and made his home in Paris.
- Q: Your father and mother both sound as if they were not only very strong people, and very brave people, but very compassionate and yet very willing to sacrifice if they had to for the lives of their loved ones. It reminds me of one of the speakers that we had for one of the Women's Division functions of the United Jewish Fund, who was a survivor, who told when they left home in Germany, the father made her take the warmest, strongest pair of shoes. And she claimed that her survival had to do with those shoes and the fact that her father -- she was separated from her parents, but she always felt, that by his making her take those boots, she walked and walked and walked, and those boots lasted for most of the time. But I think the men in those days, first of all they worked very hard. And I think they were more cognizant of what stress was than we are today. Stress today is different, but hardship was very natural in those days. And I think they knew how to protect themselves more.

A: Sure. I remember stories that my grandmother used to tell, and now I'm sorry I didn't write them down, how they ran away during the First World War! and how my father was telling us how he had to fend for himself during the First World War! I think these things made people, like you say, more aware of how to survive. He really was very well known!. And it really saved our lives! He never told my mother that he gave that Romanian officer the 200 lei when he was new in the area, because my mother probably would have said, like. "Why did you have to give him the money? You'll never see it again," and so on. He was young, that officer, and he needed the money. And that, really, sort of saved our lives!

Q: Was he a religious man?

A: I couldn't say that my father has a lot of religious knowledge, because in First World War, his mother died. He was just observant. Later on when he settled, he used to like to study a bit. And of course the faith in God never left us. Even now, he still hopes that my mother will walk one day.

Q: What's the matter with your mother?

A: She had a stroke. She's been bedridden. I think even the fact that she is alive for so many years is because my father is so good to her, and he tells her, whenever she's down, "Oh, you'll still dance with me!" One day she was very depressed, and she cried, and I told her, "Listen, don't cry. We are good to you and we love you. And my sister comes and I come. And we have Daddy here. And he's not senile!" And I said -- that was three years ago when I saw her -- "Some people that got sick at that time are already dead and look! You're still with us and you'll live to see the great grandchildren." And my father said, "Yes! That the Russians occupied Afghanistan, and there they let the Shah go! And you're still with us!" And he said, "These people that die, they're already bored, they want to come back." So this is his philosophy, and his sense of humor. He really fought to pull us through.

Q: I'm sure he did! Are you in contact with any of the people that you knew from the camps?

A: Yeah. There are some in Israel that I have seen and my sister had a wedding -- her daughter's wedding -- that all of them were invited. Some of them were from our little town. They all came.

Q: It's like an extended family.

A: Sure. That's part of the family. I have seen them when I was in Israel at my niece's wedding. Of course they have all changed. And that one man -- I haven't heard lately about him--the one that used to tease me, that I told my father, "Daddy, give them everything! I want to live!" -- he was at my niece's wedding.

As a matter of fact he has a son that my father wanted to fix up with my older daughter, Susan. They met in Paris, but he was a lot older.

Q: There was one other thing that I didn't really ask you about. When did you meet your husband?

A: I met my husband, I think, in '49. And we got married in '50. In Romania. And he was from that town where we lived. And he worked in a different little town there, where we got married.

Q: Was he ever in a camp?

A: Yes. He was about 30 miles from where I was. My father knew his father from way back before.

Q: You didn't have a shidach?

A: Well, no. We met through Max's uncle. Max's cousin was my good girlfriend, and his uncle kept on telling him, "I have a girl for you, but I'm waiting her sister should get married first." (Laughter) After my sister got married, he saw that we should meet. Max is eight years older than I am. So he came, and we met, and his uncle came to talk to my father, we should get married right away. And my mother said, "No, she doesn't want to, because she doesn't want that we should split up. One daughter is here. If it's going to be b'shert, we're all going to meet in Israel." Then, when my parents had an occasion to leave -- Max used to come to Bucharest, at that time, we lived in Bucharest -- my parents saw that it will be better if they will leave and I will stay back.

Q: When did they leave for France then?

A: They left in 1950 -- in June -- the day after Max and I got engaged. They were not at my wedding, not at my sister's wedding, but they were at three granddaughters' weddings. That sort of made it up. They came here to both weddings -- to my children and to my sister's one daughter.

Q: How many children do you have?

A: I have three. Lydia, and Susan is 31, and Steven is 22.

Q: Are they all here?

A: Susan's in Los Angeles and Steven is at home. Steven has a communication problem.. He has autistic characteristics. One more thing to contend with. But he's done real well, and we are really proud of him. He's working right now, where Max is. And he's a good boy.

Q: Have you ever talked to them about your past experiences?

A: At first the children were too little, were small. Then I used to, especially on a Friday night when Max would be sometimes in Shul, and we would wait for him to come home. I really never went into detail like this, and I thought, "I really should do it." I was going to write it down with my hand, but then never did. And I thought I should put it on tape, that some day my grandchildren will hear my voice. (Laughter)

Q: It's so important that we have, as we get older, particularly, a feeling for our roots, no matter what they are.

A: I remember being fascinated by the stories my grandmother used to tell me about her experiences. You know, First World War, I remember how she came back, and how she was telling me how she rebuilt that home where she lived. And I remember thinking at that time, it was such an interesting story. And now I'll never know it again unless my father still remembers something.

Q: You mention that you lost all your family pictures. Did you have anything at all that you kept from before?

A: I really can't think of one thing! We had one pillow and my father's storm coat! That I know was guarded.

Q: Is it in a museum anywhere?

A: No. I really don't even know what happened to that storm coat, because it really kept us warm! And I remember they made, when we were in that little town, two little dresses out of ticking! My sister and I lived through it and I don't even know what we wore in the winter. My father, when he started dealing with the old clothes the people were selling, got the girl's coat for my brother. My brother, when he was a little boy, while we were in the concentration camp, in that last ghetto, that first winter he just used to stay and warm himself, and we used to say, "Send him outside, go play with the children." He used to say, "I'm afraid." That I remember. He would just stay in the house.

Q: How old was he?

A: He was two years younger than me. I was 10 when we were deported so he was eight.

Q: How do you feel today about relationships with non-Jews? Do you have any feelings at all that have carried over, or that are just part of you?

A: I'm sure I do. I work in a store where I deal with people, and all kinds of people come in. And people will come with accents and I could tell they're from the

Ukraine and from Russia, and from that part where we were when the Germans started to withdraw. There was a detachment of Ukrainians and Russians that joined the Nazi army, and they were collaborators, were with the families running away with the Nazis, and they were killing Jews on their way. And whenever I see one and she tells me, "Oh, we went away, we were taken away by the Germans to camps." I know that it's not the truth! I have a suspicious feeling! I think. "Well, this is a young person. She must have been a small child or he must have been a small child when that happened." They had nothing to do with it, but there is that suspicious nature. A human being is a human being, but deep down, I'm sure I have this. I didn't forget!

Q: There have been many books and many movies and things that have shown the Holocaust. Do you think they've been fairly accurate?

A: Yes. I think so.

Q: Do you think they depicted it in the right light?

A: Because ours was just a very small part, where I come from, not too much is being said. There might be some books written also about Transnistria but I think whatever happened. I'm sure it happened.

Q: I know that in my experience with some of the people who came to the United States, people who came here from Germany or Poland who were survivors, when they first came to the United States, they were really very reluctant, some of them, even to say they were Jews, let alone to discuss what happened. But in the last few years, I find more and more of the survivors who are willing to share. How do you feel? Why do you think that is, Edith?

A: I don't know. I think maybe because people are more interested in listening. I don't think they were reluctant to share, because I remember when we came here and we wanted to share some of our experiences with the family, and we just didn't notice any interest. And then we just never talked about it.

Q: Do you think that maybe because there has been nationally so much more emphasis on the Holocaust, too, that people are more willing to discuss it?

A: I think so.

Q: And the fact that we want our children to remember, and that children of all races should understand what the Holocaust was. Maybe that is one of the reasons? Because I found it very interesting when I looked at the list of people who would like to be interviewed. There were names on there that I know they would never discuss it when they first came.

A: Yeah. As I said, when we came here, we tried to tell, and people did not...

- Q: You didn't find the right people to listen. That was the problem.
- A: Yeah. So we just didn't talk about it. And I know, to this day, whenever it's raining outside and I am cozy in bed, I am grateful to have a roof over my head.
- Q: Yes, I'm sure. And all your family, thank God, were able to survive and get married and have families.
- A: Yes. Except my mother's sister. She died. And we were told later that her child that was three years old was thrown alive in the grave by somebody that miraculously survived. All these people from the town, they were like related. And there is one young man -- he's not too young when I looked at him now, you see where the years have gone by -- there were three. One died of cancer, one went into the Russian army (I don't know what happened) and there's one in Israel, and he is just like family. He survived. He came back to Chernovitz, from Poland. He was the one that was separated from us that first Saturday evening, he's the only one that survived out of three brothers and a sister and a father and a mother. He's still very close with my sister, and his son is a doctor in Israel, and his daughter is a doctor in Israel. They were in Paris last summer and they came to my brother, and it's just like family, close family, because we are the only ones that are left from that area that are more or less contemporary.
- Q: Do you think that the Jews that are left in Romania are fairly comfortable, or do you think that they would all -- or a lot of them would -- like to leave?
- A: I think some of them would like to leave. They're mainly older people left, and they have their pensions there and their homes, and their way of life. A new beginning is very hard. I remember when we came here. I didn't speak a word English, I really didn't. And it was so hard! I cried through nights. I told my husband, 'Let's go back to Europe, or to Israel.' So I can understand some of the people not wanting to. I think the ones that are left are just older people, and I don't think that they would want to uproot. Life in Romania is very difficult now-a-days -- not only for the Jews, but for the non-Jews, too. They have no food there
- Q: What about your family in France. How do they feel with the last few years of all the episodes?
- A: They're scared. My father's only outlet now is to go on Shabbos to the synagogue, and when these things started to happen, he said he's kind of scared to go to the synagogue.
- Q: Do they go with other people, so they're in a group when they go, or do they go alone?

A: Well, there are people in the neighborhood that walk there. He would go, maybe meet somebody. My brother lives right around the corner. And the Jewish school there, the mothers have to stay in the street. My sister-in-law volunteers, I don't know how often, to stay when the children are brought to school and when they're being picked up. It's frightening.

Q: Do they ever have feelings of leaving France to go to Israel?

A: The first time my sister-in-law wrote this summer, she went during vacation to Israel to a kibbutz, and she said she met some French people that left France two years ago, and she writes me, "If your mother wouldn't be so sick, I think I would like to pack up and move to Israel, because I can't take it." She was in Israel when all these things had happened in Paris, and she said, "I can't take this, to be afraid to show your face." If they can hide that they are Jews, they do. They don't go around advertising "I'm Jewish" there.

Q: It's a very uncomfortable way to live.

A: Very, very. It's very sad. And on Rosh Hashanah, when I walked to the synagogue here, I thought, "Thank God, I don't have to be afraid here, to walk to synagogue." Then Lydia came -- she comes to our synagogue on the High Holidays -- and she says, "You know, Mother, they had a bomb threat at Beth El."

Q: It's gotten worse this year here, too, and all over the country. When you mention God, how do you feel about your faith?

A: Oh, there's no question about it. I have complete faith in God, even though sometimes I have a few questions to ask him. (cries)

Q: Well, last night, if you had been at the Temple, Rabbi Raskas says that if we doubt, then we have faith. That part of faith is the doubt -- to ask and to question. And I think that one other question maybe is something that you can share with me. How do you feel about being privileged to survive? I mean, do you feel there's anything special that that means to you?

A: No. No. I just feel that God wanted it that way, and it was b'shert, and I don't feel guilty that I survived. I've heard that some do. I don't, and I'm just happy to be alive. I'm real happy about it, that I survived, and I just wish everybody would have. And, of course, sometimes, when I have my "low" moments, I thought, "What's the use," but then, oh, I think life is beautiful! And it's nice to get up in the morning. (Starts to cry).

Q: Well, I thank you for sharing all these sensitive things. It's hard for you, I know, but I think that it will be important that others learn from your experience.

A: Well, thanks. I hope I did okay.

Q: You did beautifully.