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Summary

Magda Fleischmann was born on April 8, 1914, in Beocin, Yugoslavia (now in Serbia), and grew up in Petrovo Selo (Serbia). Her maternal family, the Steins, were merchants. Her paternal family lived in Novi Sad. She went to high school in Senta (Serbia). Before the war, her father was a forestry and lumber products manufacturing manager; he and the other Jewish managers were fired after the occupation.

After high school, she returned home and got married in 1939. Her husband, who was a veterinarian, was drafted into the army in 1940. When two Jewish men where her father worked were murdered by the Germans, she realized she and her young son need to leave. They hid in the cemetery in Letenske. Her maid helped her reach Novi Sad, where her sister was. In around 1941, they got papers for her husband, who had completed his army service, and he joined his parents in Srbobran. When she was with her sister in Novi Sad, they saw tanks enter the town and knew that they needed to try to reach her husband, but they and 20-30 other Jews on the train were taken off by the Hungarian gendarmerie. They were all released after three days. She and her sister helped in the inn where they stayed, which was owned by a Jewish family. The people in the town, many of whom were Vends, helped them.

In 1943, she and her sister reached Budapest, Hungary. She met her relative, David Mandel, who was the secretary of the Palestine Bureau. One of his relatives was the cantor at the Dohany Street Synagogue. They organized the Kastner group that was going to Switzerland. He offered to take her young son. She agreed because she wanted to save him at any cost. She stayed with her husband's relatives at 13 Belingrad Street, which was a Jewish building. After the Arrow Cross arrived, she and her sister were sent to a brick factory for a night. The next day two men came: one was aristocratic, tall, handsome, confident, who walked along the rows where they sat. This was Wallenberg. They were soon freed. She received Swedish sponsorship papers and they lived in the Swedish house. After about two weeks, four members of the Arrow Cross took a young man. When they left, the boy's mother said that they were Jews in the underground saving young Jews. The Germans returned and took the residents of the house to a soccer field. Those in the front were taken on a death march. She and her sister stayed to the side and were sent back to the Swedish house. About a week or two later, a month before Christmas, the Arrow Cross came and put took them to a train. She saw Wallenberg with a Hungarian officer go car by car calling out "Vera," trying to save the officer's lover. They found her and she got off. The train took them to Bergen Belsen.

At the end of the war, she weighed 75 lbs. Only the desire to live enabled a person to survive. Her sister was sick, lost her will to live, and died. She had typhus and was in the clinic until liberation. She stayed alive because her son was alive. She was in the camp from December 1944 to liberation in April 1945.

Her son was sent to Kibbutz Sha'ar HaAmakim. She was part of Aliyah Bet and reached Israel in July 1948. When she met her son, he was seven. Her husband survived in Yugoslavia; he reached Israel in 1948 during Hannukah.