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Oral History Summary: Agnes Kadar, December 4, 1996

Agnes Kadar, born in Sovata, Transylvania (Romania) on May 25, 1924 to Frank and Helen [PH] Kadar describes: a well to do family, a younger sister, Asoka, who was very close; a beautiful family and a large extended family; no sense of anti-Semitism until the days of the Juden star in 1944; a family-owned sawmill and wood retail business, which employed many people; a small Jewish community; a “good mixture” of Jewish and gentile friends; both religious and secular education; her father dying in 1943; not believing until 1943-44 that bad things would happen to them; the family business being seized; life being fairly normal until Jews were rounded up in 1944; not comprehending the meaning of concentration camps until the roundup; valuables being seized from those rounded up; being taken with the entire Jewish community of about 120 people in an open truck to Targu Mures, about 80 km from Sovata; particularly wealthy people undergoing torture and interrogation, but still having no reference to a concentration camp; hiding jewels in a toothpaste tube but throwing the tube away to avoid being beaten; on May 25, 1944, everyone being rounded up by the SS and taken to a rail station; being placed in cattle wagons and taken to Auschwitz, arriving on May 26; having nothing to eat; Agnes and her sister being separated from their mother; having vivid memories of smoke from the crematoria chimneys, as well as of the smell, the watchtowers, and the “perfect German organization” of the process; being in Lager C1; her sister being very sick; supporting each other providing a reason to fight for survival; being in Auschwitz from May to September 1944 and never being assigned work; being advised not to turn down opportunities to work; everyone being treated cruelly by a Czech Jewess, who was executed after the war; doing whatever possible to keep occupied, including singing and talking with other prisoners; being told that her mother and relatives had died but not being willing to believe it; (shows tattoo and describes tattooing process); being selected for work by Mengele and removed from Auschwitz; wanting to be selected because selection would probably mean survival; being taken to Bergen-Belsen; names of surviving prisoners being hidden in food containers; getting better food in Belsen to enable work; overall, conditions being improved compared to Auschwitz; after two months, being moved to a Junkers plane factory; reveling in taking a proper, warm water shower and being given decent clothes; having a sympathetic guard who shielded her from the SS; being moved to a basement shelter as bombing increased; in spring 1945, being moved to the outskirts of Leipzig as the Americans approached; food becoming scarce; moving to a small village and seeking work in the guise of Hungarian workers; Agnes and her sister making their way to Prague with the help of the Russian Red Cross; reaching home in mid-May after an arduous journey; finding their home stripped bare by looters; almost her entire extended family never returning; attempting to reach Israel via Austria, but being caught and placed in an Austrian DP camp for three years; meeting her husband and moving to Australia in 1949; building a family life; lauding the Australian people; being proud to be Jewish and to be welcomed in Australia; shows photo with her sister.