

## **RG-50.407.0202**

### **Summary**

Maria Curtis was born in Salonika, Greece in 1923. Her parents were Israel and Emma (Capone) Cirol (?). She had an older brother, Moshe, and younger sisters Joya (Lola), Matika and Retika. Her parents had also grown up in Salonika. Her father was a coppersmith. Her family was well off and fairly religious. Maria says she experienced only minor anti-Semitism and that Jews were active in many parts of the community.

Her family had little knowledge beyond the newspapers about what was happening in Germany. When German troops entered Salonika, her father rented a house in a nearby village, but then returned after the Germans settled in. In 1943, Jews were required to wear the yellow Star of David, but Jewish businesses could continue. They were soon moved into a ghetto for 16-18 days until, with little advance notice, her family and other Jews were told to pack; they were then marched to a temporary camp. With aid of some girlfriends, Maria was able to escape under the wire.

Her friends, Russian Greek daughters of a priest, helped hide her both in a house in Salonika and in a small village for a long while. She could not locate her friends after the war. She and her protectors had no idea where the Jews in the camp were sent or the existence of the concentration camps. Once the Germans were driven out, she sought aid from the Jewish organizations. They arranged a job in a canteen where she met her husband, George, an English soldier. Only one younger sister survived for reasons unclear. Maria and her husband went to Portsmouth, England and married in 1947. She and her husband immigrated to Australia to join her sister in 1952, where George joined her sister's husband as a baker. They had one daughter who died young of meningitis.