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Summary

Clara Wolf/ Tsukerman

Her father changed their last name to Woltyan, that sounded “more Russian”.

Clara had three brothers; older brother’s name was Boris, middle brother Vitya and Misha.

Her father’s name was Yakov, mother’s Mirley Davidovna

Clara was born in Kishinev, Romania in 1928. In 1940 the Soviet Government took over the city. Her parents had a small store and it was closed. Her parents had good relationships with Romanian neighbors; they exchanged gifts, exchanged special foods.

At the same time they experienced antisemitism, they heard antisemitic stories about baby’s blood in matzah.

One day she went to visit her cousin and in the middle of the night they heard bombing and it was the beginning of the war. In 1941 their city was bombed and her family evacuated. The whole family moved on horses with wagons with other Jews away from the front line.

They went towards the village Bolbo, towards Tiraspol. They stopped in the Ukrainian collective farm. They stayed there for about a week, they had very little food. The director of the collective farm asked her father to organize the transfer of the cows from this farm to another collective farm in the village Vasilievka, Stalingrad region, collective farm Kirov. Her younger brother, Victor was hunting for wild rabbits.

They were traveling in a big group, 11 wagons and cattle. One man directed their group to move through Kalmyk steppe. One night they were stopped by Kalmyk band and they were robbed. Clara remembered that Kalmyk were about to kill them, but they were scared away by the German airplanes.

Eventually they came to the village that was occupied by the Germans, but they had nowhere to go, so they settle in that village.

They lived in dugout barracks below the ground level. Barracks were made of clay with tiny windows. During the winter the barracks were completely covered by snow. They had bank beds, a stove, and a gas lamp.

Russian people from the village gave them a Russian icon.

The Killing squad that arrived to the village consisted of Romanian officers.

Clara’s friend introduced her to one Romanian officer, she told him that she was a Romanian, she spoke fluent Romanian language, but that officer tried to find her, so her mother told her to hide in the home of a neighbor, aunty Tanya, a Russian woman who lived alone. It was 1942.

Clara ended up staying in that house until aunt’s Tanya’s son came back. Tanya took very good care of Clara, she had turkeys and she had a vegetable garden and potatoes.

Her father worked as a guard at the dairy farm he always was hiding among animals.

Clara told a story about her brother, who went to another city and brought salt so much needed, he did it during very cold winter.

Clara remembered that there were good people who helped them to survive during the war.

Clara helped other people to get to a town where they were able to exchange items they brought from home for food. And she had to get a pass form the regional administration for herself and other people in that village.

Once she went with her brother during the winter to get food and they stopped in the middle of nowhere and one poor woman told them to get corn from under the snow. They went to the town and they had no money so they went from home to home and asked for food. One family gave her brother a small pie.

Once they stopped at the small place to get directions and one woman made a very special soup with home-made pasta, that Clara remembers for this day.

During the war life was very difficult, they had to search for food all the time; they used ashes as soap; they used branches for the stove to keep their barrack warm.

The village was very close to the front. The Germans already made a list of all Jews and communists, but they were liberated before Germans could kill them.

Clara remembered that after a major battle, they found many dead soldiers in their own "backyard", three of them according to documents were Jewish.

After the liberation the family stayed in the village. Clara went to school; in the summer all students worked in the village collective farm.

It was 1943, winter was very cold. She and other children walked to school 6 km. Older brother, Vitya, worked to support the family and that allowed Clara and her younger brother, Misha to go to school.

Her brother and she became tractor drivers, then she worked in a store; then she worked as a bookkeeper.

Older brother, Boris, joined the Red Army, but he was killed after 6 months during the battle at city Stalin. He was 19 years old.

Clara remembered that they didn't have any letters from her brother for several months. Clara was the first who read notification that her brother was killed in the battle, she shared it with her brother and father and they decided not to tell their mother at that time.

They had one cow that saved them from starvation.

They had a big family, when they evacuated they left an aunt and an uncle who were sent to the concentration camp where they were killed. One cousin ran away, but he was captured and executed, he was about 25 years old.

After the war Clara alone returned to Kishinev to one of her uncles. She started working in the laboratory at the hospital.

She married Yakov in 1949. They have 2 daughters, three grandsons and one granddaughter.

Her family celebrated all Jews holidays and her father went to the synagogue when the village was a part of Romania.

Her parents followed traditions after the war. Now she follows traditions and she has special dishes for Passover.

After the war when Tanya was arrested for hiding food, Clara went to the judge and begged him to let Tanya go, because she saved lives during the war.

Clara thinks that she had several "happiest days" In her life; when she got married; when her daughters and then her grandson were born.

They were very happy when they received official papers in Italy during their immigration to America.

The smell from the war time was a smell of fresh hay, and also the view of the field covered with tulips.