

## **RG-50.493.0058**

### **Summary**

Mariana (Geller) Rosman (Jewish name: Miriam; nickname: Mika) was born on January 12, 1932 in a small town in Bessarabia called Briceni (now the town is in Moldova). Bessarabia changed hands in 1918 from Russia to Rumania and was part of Rumania during the Holocaust. At the time of the interview Ms. Rosman was a retired teacher living in California with her husband, Ted, who was also a survivor from Rumania. She had two children and two grandchildren. Her father's name was Isaac and mother's Sara. Her father was a grain and bean exporter before the war. Both parents survived the war with her. She had no siblings or other close relatives living with her, though her mother's father and aunt and two children, who lived in a neighboring province, were killed in the Holocaust. She spoke several languages, including Yiddish, Russian, Rumanian, French, German, English (acquired later in the U.S.), Spanish (acquired later in Cuba), and a little Hebrew. Her family was culturally Russian.

Ms. Rosman's Holocaust experience began very early since Russia occupied Bessarabia in 1939 and the family was forced to move out of their house into one room apartment. The family, considered "bourgeois" by the Russians, was also given a passport that did not allow them to leave the town they were in. But the father was resourceful and after several months was able to get them a passport to go to the city of Czernowitz (Cernauti). But after 10 months the Germans came in and started deporting men for labor. Her father hid out. After a while (she was eight) the Germans deported the family, including her father, to Transnistria, then controlled by the Rumanians but under German guidance. There were 118 camps under Rumanian jurisdiction and many more nearby across the Bug River under German jurisdiction. The family was deported in a very crowded boxcar with no windows. They survived the trip and were fortunate to find a room with another Jewish family who helped find them food. Life was extremely hard, witnessed by the fact that the three of them were among only sixty or so survived out of 1200. Most died of starvation or disease.

Ms. Rosman's mother remained optimistic and held out the promise that her sister, living in Florida since the 1920s would ultimately get them out of Europe to the United States. Indeed, that finally happened, but it took several years. When the Russians liberated the camp in the fall of 1944 the family was able to make their way to Bucharest, the capital of Rumania. After three hard years and then several months in France her aunt and the Red Cross were finally able to get the family out in 1948 when she was sixteen. Because of immigration restrictions the family first had to go to Cuba and stayed there until 1960, where they lived in relative luxury because of her aunt's financial support. Ms. Rosman, while her family was still in Cuba, did go to Florida for her college education and married there. Her mother and father were early supporters of Fidel Castro, but once he came to power they opposed his communist policies, so they were determined to leave. By then, Ms. Rosman had returned to Cuba.

In 1960 the family was able to emigrate to the U.S., which by then had changed its immigration policies. Ms. Rosman came with her husband, who she had married in Cuba, and her two young children. After a short stay in Florida she and her family, including her mother and father, came to California. Ms. Rosman fondly remembered her aunt, Frida Minzer, who was determined to

find family still alive in Europe and support their emigration. She was also very thankful to the U.S. for her wonderful life here.