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Recorded in Berehove, Ukraine on October 5-6, 2016

Summary

Magda ÚJVÁRI (born Magda Braunstein) in Beregszász, in the Carpatho_Ruthenian region of Hungary (now Berehove, Ukraine) on February 18, 1930. Her father, Zsigmond Braunstein was born to a Jewish family in Balazsér (now Balazher), close to Beregszász, her mother, Mária Weiss, was born in Késmárk, Hungary (now Kežmarok, Slovakia), to an Austrian father and Hungarian mother. She was of the Catholic faith. Zsigmond Braunstein was a civil servant in the Hungarian administration and refused to swear the oath of office to the Czechoslovak administration [after 1920, when Carpatho-Ruthenia became part of Czechoslovakia by the Treaty of Trianon]. He also developed epilepsy after World War I, and, for both these reasons was not able to find employment. In addition, he married a Christian wife without his parents' approval. They excluded him from the family and did not support him, although they were well-to-do. According to Magda, her parents and four siblings lived in abject poverty. She had three older brothers and a sister: Zoltán (1919), Sándor (1922), Lenke (1924), and Tibor (1926). Her brothers were raised in the Jewish faith of the father. The two girls were baptized as Catholics, like their mother. During the elementary school years, they attended a Catholic school taught by nuns. She said that her parents never argued about religion. They respected each other's religion, and followed their own. Her father celebrated the Jewish holidays. Her mother had no time and means to celebrate the Christian holidays.

On the father's side, there were wealthy relatives in Beregszász (Váry and Winkler who owned a brick factory, Korach, who owned a pharmacy), but they did not support Magda's family. In the early 1920s, after her father's parents died, her father inherited money from them. He started different business ventures but failed, and they remained in poverty. Magda attributed this to her father's lack of business sense. He also received bad advice from his brother-in-law who handled the family finances. The family rented a one-bedroom house without electricity and running water in Tinody Street. Magda's mother took up seasonal work.

Their situation improved after 1938, when Hungary reoccupied the *Felvidék* (Upper Province) with part of Carpatho-Ruthenia. Magda's father applied for compensation for his lost years of employment and for a pension. Around 1940, he received over 3,000 pengő for 17 years, and a small monthly pension. The family moved to a better house on Bocskai Street, and bought furniture and clothing.

Official antisemitism and anti-Jewish legislation arrived with the Hungarian administration, and many Jews fled the town. She mentioned the owners of the local hotel, the Dénes family. There were rumors that Hungarian soldiers abused old Orthodox Jews, while Jewish children were made fun of and beaten. Nobody showed solidarity with the Jews. Magda claimed that in 1942, the Hungarians collected the Jewish elite of Beregszász and seized their property. From hearsay she learned that the well-known Jewish obstetrician, Dr. Zsigmond Hubert poisoned himself before he could be taken away.

Magda remembered the German occupation of March 19, 1944. Her mother listened to German-language broadcasts during the war and was very afraid of Hitler. Soon, her father and brothers had to wear the Yellow Star. Ghettoization came very suddenly, in April 1944. Magda was not at home, when her father had to go to the ghetto, and she never saw him again. Magda's brothers were also ghettoized, but the two older brothers were called up for forced labor. Her father and younger brother Tibor were sent to Auschwitz. As Tibor told after the war, he tried to persuade his father to present himself as capable of work, but the father thought that he and his elderly neighbors, the Schwartz couple, would take care of the children in Auschwitz. They went into the column so designated and ended up in the gas chamber. Tibor survived and returned after an American soldier saved his life.

The moveable properties of the deported Jews were "pillaged," even those from the synagogue. Christians occupied Jewish homes. Magda's mother moved them to an abandoned Jewish home (Neider family) for a short time as well [not clear what the reason was].

In summer 1944, a neighbor, János Dancs denounced Magda's mother for hiding two Jewish girls. Although proving to the gendarmes that the girls were baptized, the mother was so frightened that she sent Magda and her sister into hiding on a farmstead for a few weeks. Magda remembers the fear and hunger from that time.

Her older brothers also returned from forced labor; Zoltán signed up for the militia, which protected the civil population. In this way he was able after liberation to protect his mother and sisters from Russian soldiers. Later, he signed up for the Czech Legion, marrying a Czech woman and remaining in Czechoslovakia. Sándor remained in Beregszász and worked in a sawmill. In the 1950s, Tibor was imprisoned for 13 years for minor embezzlement. His Jewish origin played a role in this harsh sentence. Lenke, the older sister, also worked in the sawmill, and married the director who was a devoted Communist Party member even before the war.

After the war, Magda finished her education in a public middle school, and then, at age 17 she began working in the local clothing factory. She was sent to Kyiv for three years of training and became the head of a workers' brigade. She worked in the same place and capacity for 45 years. She described an official, but hidden anti-Semitism, which manifested itself in varying degrees in the 1950s and 1960s. She mentioned that once she did not receive a high state reward, which she deserved, because she was of Jewish origin.

She married in 1952, a Hungarian, who was of peasant background. They had two sons; one died of a childhood illness in 1962. She had a second son two years later.

At the end of the interview, she showed photos of her father and mother, taken in 1940.