

Gisela Eiferman



This is my mother, Gisela Eiferman nee Weiner. When this photo was taken she was living in the retirement home in Braila. She spent 20 years there, for she was ill.

My mother was born in 1904 in the village of Sipot, just like my father. I don't know how they met. They got married in the early 1920's and I was born in 1925. I was an only child. I don't know how many grades my mother had completed in school, but she also knew the Gothic alphabet. My grandparents and my parents used Yiddish at home. I can still speak Yiddish. I can also speak German - we lived amidst Poles, Germans and Ukrainians.

My mother was a housewife and my father worked in the timber business. They didn't have machines back then - they used horses, so the work was harder. The village had timber tradesmen, house builders, carpenters and even a timber yard - plenty of jobs were available. My parents' economic situation was average.

My parents dressed in the Jewish fashion of the time. My father wore a hat called "hut" - it's called the same in German - or "kopheletz", but didn't wear whiskers; he had already become more modern. Women were quite modern too; in summer they didn't cover their head anymore. My parents were religious. They had prayer books at home and they read them.

My mother would cook chicken on holidays. For instance, on Rosh Hashanah, we would have chicken stake, soup and many sweets. We didn't eat bread on Passover, only matzah. We also had chicken stew, "meatballs" made of potatoes and a particular type of cake that I can't remember anymore. We were supplied by people from Berhomet with beef that had been ritually slaughtered

and was sure to be kosher. My mother kept a chest as large as a bed in the pantry; it contained special dishes that we only used once a year. Wine consumption was scarce in my parents' house. We usually had a small glass on Passover. It went the same for 'tuica' [plum brandy].

On 2 June 1941 all the Jews in our village were assembled and sent to Transnistria; we weren't allowed to take any belongings with us. I got separated from my father and my grandfather. The rest of my family and I were taken to the next village. I was with my mother, with Uncle David Dauber and with my cousins.

On 6 April 1946 my mother and I returned to Romania. The Russians had allowed us to cross the border on condition that we would go to Israel. Many Jews took that opportunity. Although we were only supposed to transit Romania, my mother wouldn't go any further, so stayed here. The first time we came to Braila, my mother and I were lodged by the Herscovici family who lived at the last number on Republicii St. We stayed one year with them.

We later received aids from the Joint. They gave us money because we had been to Transnistria. And they gave us a house in Braila. If you were able to prove you had been deported, they would give you clothes, money and food. They also ran a canteen. I found a job. I provided for my mother for as long as she lived. I arranged for her to receive a surviving spouse's pension, as my father had been shot to death. She spent 20 years in the retirement home in Braila, for she was ill. The town didn't have an exclusive home for the Jewish elderly, like some other cities in Romania. She died in Braila on 17 June 1981. She was buried in the Jewish cemetery, but I can't remember whether a rabbi attended the ceremony or not. The town still had a rabbi while my mother was alive. Today there isn't any rabbi in Braila.