Klara Markus

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Maramarossziget
Romania
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Klara Markus is a small, slim-figured, slightly hunchbacked woman.

She's very kind and jolly. Klara is over 90 years old. She lives with her daughter and son-in-law on the first floor of a private house. Her son and his family live on the ground-floor in the same house.

Klara rarely leaves the house. She has her own room, but she likes to sit mostly in the glassed-in bright balcony which opens from her room.

Her hobbies are puzzle solving and reading, I saw both Hungarian and German books in her hand, and she never misses any episode of the soap opera 'The Young and the Restless.'

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- Growing up
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- **My family background**

My paternal grandfather, Jakab Kaufmann**,** was probably born in the 1830s in Nagykaroly. He died when I was born. The only thing I know about him is that he had a wholesale grocery store in Nagykaroly, called 'Kaufmann Jakab es fia' [Jakab Kaufmann and Son].

The company was in the same house where we lived in Nagykaroly, on Ferenc Deak Square No. 10 at that time, the main square, opposite the castle. The Karolyi counts lived in the castle then, until the castle was taken away from them [during the nationalization].

I don't remember them, it may be that they were there when I was still quite little. I only know that one of the counts fancied my aunt, Mariska Kaufmann. [Editor's note: The castle of Nagykaroly is now operating as a local museum.] The house where we lived is still there, I sold it when I moved here to Maramarossziget.

Jakab Kaufmann had three brothers: Adolf Kaufmann, Ignac Kaufmann and I don't remember the name of the third one. Adolf had a plot of land. I think it was inherited. But Adolf didn't have a diploma, well, he wasn't a lawyer, that's for sure. His children were Annus [Anna], Sanyi [Sandor] and Imre.

Annus was married to Istvan Antal, who was a lawyer in Nagykaroly. She had a son, Pali [Pal] Antal, and a daughter, Zsofi Antal, who became Zsofi Spicc after marrying Laszlo Spicc. Sanyi Kaufmann was a heavy drinker, but he was an excellent pianist. It seems they were wealthy as they didn't have to work.

Imre Kaufmann was a dentist. Bandi Kaufmann was a descendant of Ignac Kaufmann; he returned to Nagykaroly after the Holocaust, but I don't know what happened to him later, maybe he emigrated, but I don't know exactly. Bandi had a brother, Pali. And there was another Ignac Kaufmann living in Nagykaroly, I don't know exactly whose son he was, but there was something wrong with him, I think he had a screw loose in his head. He was one of those harmless fools.

My father had a cousin, Gyula Kaufmann. His daughter was Erzsi Kaufmann, so me and Erzsi were only second cousins. Erzsi's husband was Achile Falticineanu, a regular officer in the Romanian army. They lived in Bucharest.

The [Romanian] king, Michael 1, had an accident when he was a boy: he fell into the sea or lake, I don't remember, and Falticineanu jumped in and saved him. After that he was promoted, because it was a great thing then to jump in fully dressed, and all that, to save the crown prince. Nobody else dared to, only him, a Jew. Falticineanu had two daughters, I don't know whether Nori was the elder and Ani the younger one.

Aunt Lujza, Lajos Cukor's wife, was also my father's cousin, but I think from my grandmother Hani Braun's side. I don't know her maiden name. I don't know if we were related just through Aunt Lujza, or if her husband was our relative anyway.

Lajos Cukor was a doctor, and what a jewel of a man he was. I think he was a relative also from my mother's side. Uncle Lajos had another brother, Marton, who also had a daughter. They all emigrated to Hungary.

The American director, Gyorgy Cukor [Editor's note: George Dewey Cukor (New York, 1899 – Los Angeles, 1983), movie director, son of Hungarian Jewish emigrants (Viktor and Helén Cukor), his most successful films: David Copperfield (1935), The Philadelphia Story (1940), Gaslight (1944), Adam's Rib (1949), A Star Is Born (1954), Rich and Famous (1981).

He received the Oscar for My Fair Lady (1964).], was also our relative, he also emigrated from Nagyszolos, or something. My mother had a nicotine attack once, because she used to smoke then, and we immediately called Uncle Lajos because he was a doctor and also our relative. His wife came along with him, she didn't leave Uncle Lajos alone, especially when he was called by the relatives.

At that time Aunt Lujza was in such a hurry that she put on her hat backwards. She couldn't come without a hat with her husband, and it was very late, around 10pm. Our German governess laughed heartily. Formerly, a doctor's wife had a finger in every pie.

Aunt Lujza had three children: Elluska, Irenke and Pista. Ellus was deaf and dumb. I don't know where Irenke lived and who she married. Pista was a doctor. When I was a young girl he still lived in Budapest [today Hungary]. As far as I remember now, he had Parkinson's disease, because his head trembled all the time. But he was a magnificent man, a tall and handsome one. He had a pretty wife, Lenke, who was a lovely woman.

My paternal grandfather's wife was Hani Braun. She was born in the 1840s. She lived in the house we inherited later, that's where we also lived. She wore a hood, not a shawl, it's harder, but isn't a hat either. They called it hood: it covered her hair and ears. As far as I remember she only had black, dark clothes.

She didn't cook, because they had a lady cook and a housemaid, they were wealthy while she was still alive. The Jakab Kaufmann and Son company still existed then. My grandmother died at the end of the 1920s: she's buried in the Jewish cemetery in Nagykaroly.

My father had many siblings: Rezsinke, Gizella, Mariska and Ignac. The eldest one was Rezsinke, Jakab Rona's wife. They lived in Cegled [70km south-east of Budapest, Hungary] and had three children: Pista [Istvan], Ilus [Ilona] and Inci Rona, who lived and got married in America, and probably died there.

After Rezsinke was Gizella, Moric Kandel's wife. She got married in Cegled as well. We were on very good terms with them. She had four daughters: Rozsika, Kati [Katalin], Magdi [Magda] and Boris, who got married to Dunapentele. Rozsika, Imre Taub's wife, was the eldest.

The Taubs lived in Szopor, this was in Szilagy county [today Supuru de Jos, it belongs to Szatmar county, 44km east of Szatmarnemeti, Hungary], and they were millers. There were three Taub brothers: Imre Taub, Miska Taub and Endre Taub. Endre was the youngest.

Rozsika's son was Saci [Sandor], who returned to Szopor after World War II. Poor him, he was taken away by the Securitate 2, because he was very wealthy, as he had inherited a lot, and they beat the hell out of him. After he was released he committed suicide.

We lived through some awful times [during the communist era], it was horrible. Etus Fisher was Miska Taub's wife, and they had two children. One of them was deported and he died, the other one, Laci Taub, emigrated to America or somewhere with his cousin, Laci Fisher.

Laci Fisher was Gyula Fisher's son, who was Etus Fisher's brother [Editor's note: They weren't relatives, only one Taub wife was a Fisher girl, and even the Taubs became relatives by marriage with the Kaufmanns.]. The Fisher family was originally from Kiralydaroc [today Craidorolt, 33km from Szatmarnemeti].

Mariska was David Kaufmann's wife. They shared the same surname but they weren't related apart from being married. Aunt Mariska was wealthy, but she always brought the cheapest chocolate for us. They had a big grocery store in Szatmarnemeti, and they also had a gigantic cellar.

They had an enormous garden which extended to the next street. They were very wealthy! Once Aunt Mariska visited us in Nagykaroly, and there was a man called Majsi Fermann, who had a problem: he blinked all the time. My aunt thought that he was winking at her because he wanted to make advances on her, so she asked him, 'Tell me, what do you want?'

Aunt Mariska had a son, Jenoke, whose wife Margitka always used to say, 'Jenoke who will never become Jeno.' He was a careless, frivolous man, and liked women very much. They had two sons: Bandi and Laci [Laszlo]. Laci died in Russia as a forced laborer.

Bandi lives in Australia; he survived, and is probably still alive, because he was younger than me. I don't know anything about him, because he had always been an avaricious man: he was afraid all the time that he had to give out something. His first wife was deported and she didn't come back.

He got married again and emigrated to Australia with his second wife. I don't know what happened to their house, it's still there on Heim Janos Street in Szatmar. I think when Bandi came home he liquidated it, because we were only two heirs, he and myself. I didn't claim that property.

After Aunt Mariska was my father, while the youngest was Ignac**,** nick-name Naci, who lived in Nagykaroly. He had children, but I don't remember them.

My father, Jozsef Kaufmann, was born in 1870 in Nagykaroly. He graduated from the commercial school in Nagykaroly, and then he took over his father's business. He got married in 1905. It was an arranged marriage.

There were many matchmakers then: there were people with this specific occupation, who in Yiddish were called shadkhanim. My mother was wealthy, and I know that she received a large dowry in the form of cash.

She got married because my grandfather had all kinds of entanglements with women and brought home a stepmother. I'm sure my parents had a religious wedding.

My maternal grandfather, Jakab Schongut, was originally from Csernovitz, but they fled when the persecution of Jews began over there. He was a tubby man, and had a silvery full beard. I remember him as being already old. He was a very decent, religious Jew, but he was very bright.

He always wore a hat, but it was a strange one: they used to make hats from felt then, a small one, not the usual bowler-hat. He dressed normally, didn't wear a caftan or something like that, because he wasn't very religious. He used to go to the Neolog 3 synagogue. He had a bakery in Maramarossziget, which was later taken over by one of his sons, Imre Schongut.

They lived in the same building where the Schongut bakery was. There was a five-room apartment in the yard, with a storey in the front. My grandfather lived in the apartment, while Imre Schongut, his wife and three children lived upstairs.

I didn't know my grandmother, Jozefin Sternberg, because when my mother got married she had already passed away. She was born in Maramarossziget, and had two brothers: Pal and Jancsi [Janos]. Pal Sternberg was an old, small, slim-figured man, and lived in Maramarossziget.

He was single. Jancsi Sternberg lived in Maramarossziget, too, and had no family either. Then there was Berta, my grandmother's sister, in Nagyszolos, who had two daughters, Rozsi [Rozsa] and another one. Elza, Mimi and Zsofi [Zsofia] were my grandmother's nieces.

My grandmother's third brother, whose name I don't recall, was their father. They moved to Sziget [today Hungary], I don't know how, but anyway, they went away. Poor Mimi was paralyzed or something, as she couldn't walk. I only recall that when we met Mimi, I was still a child, and I wanted to kiss her, and my mother pulled me back. God knows what illness she had, or why my mother didn't let me kiss her, or her kiss me. Mimi was a delicate, distinguished person.

My grandmother had gallstone, and went to Karlsbad 4 for treatment and died there in 1905. She had a huge, inoperable gallstone. She's buried in the Jewish cemetery in Maramarossziget. Immediately after she died, my grandfather found someone; I don't know who she was.

Anyway, he had all kinds of entanglements with women, and that's why my mother got married in 1905. From the time I can remember, my grandfather had a German housemaid, Fraulein [Miss] Ida, and they lived together. Fraulein Ida was a housekeeper before.

My grandfather didn't marry her, because she remained Ida Koni all her life, but he lived with her until his dying day, and Ida took care of him. As far as I know, my family paid some kind of compensation to Ida. She was a very decent woman, and only spoke German; Grandfather Schongut spoke with her in German, too, that was their mother tongue. Back then every Jew knew German. My grandfather died in 1931 in Maramarossziget.

Grandfather Schongut had five children: Sandor, Emil, my mother, Erno, and the youngest, Imre. Sandor had a broker agency in Maramarossziget where he was one of the contact men, i.e. he established business connections between people. He was extremely honest and fair.

His wife was Gitta, and they had two children, Klari [Klara] and Laci [Laszlo]. Klari was the same age as my elder sister, who was four years older than me. They called her big Klari and me little Klari. She married Dr. Sandor Grossman in Szatmar[nemeti]. Laci was two years older than me. He graduated from a medical school in Paris, and remained there. He became a doctor in Montpellier. His wife, Erzsebet Gross, was a painter.

Dr. Emil Schongut was a lawyer in Budapest, and his wife, Vilma Heller, died of appendicitis when their younger daughter was nine months old. Uncle Emil was shot into the Danube [see Banks of Danube] 5 in 1944. They had two daughters, Jutka [Judit] and Agi [Agnes]. Jutka died young, she had some problems with her cardiac valve. Agi, Gross after marriage, still lives in Budapest, but I haven't heard from her in very long, although she used to phone me.

Dr. Erno Schongut was a doctor, and he also lived in Budapest. He married Gizi Berczi, the daughter of the owner of the large Berczi needle-craft store.

Imre Schongut, the youngest, took over the bakery. He was the religious one from my uncles. His wife was Berta Szmuk, and they had three children: Zsofi [Zsofia], Ocsi and Sanyika [Sandor]. Sanyika was the youngest; he died in Auschwitz [today Poland] as a child, while Zsofi and Ocsi survived.

They were the only relatives from Maramarossziget who returned from the deportation. Zsofi is eight or ten years younger than me, and after World War II she got married to Cali Berger. Everything was taken away from them during the nationalization and they remained without anything.

They emigrated to Israel. They have a son, Imi [Imre], who has a wife. But when Viktor went there [Klara Markus refers to her son here], they didn't want to receive Viktor and his son, because his wife has some nervous affection, at least that's what I think.

Ocsi [Lazar Schongut] had a wife, Lili, and two children: Nomika and Kobi. Kobi is married and has three children. Nomi had a general blood-poisoning as a child, and as a result one of her hands and

one of her legs remained shorter, therefore she limps. However, she was a very sweet child. She got married, and her husband is also physically handicapped: he limps, too.

My mother, Rozika, was born in Maramarossziget in 1885. My mother finished elementary school and six years of the higher girls' grammar school, and then she was sent to Vienna [today Austria] for a year to a school called 'Hochschule' [high school], to learn the language.

And this was something back then! My mother was fluent in German and Hungarian, but she never managed to learn Romanian. She was all-kind, a woman with a heart of gold. If one asked her for something, she always gave it away.

It didn't matter whether we would miss it, she was very giving. Even though we weren't rich, if someone came to us, under no circumstances did they leave without getting food or something. In former times, the hairdresser went to the women daily to do their hair.

There was a hairdresser who came to my mother every day. She was called Lilike Goldberger, but we children made fun of her, calling her Dilike [crazy liz] Goldberger. My mother had long hair back then, which had to be plaited and bundled up, depending on the occasion.

I don't remember my father, because he died in August 1917 of heart disease, when I was only three. In those days, barrels were rolled into the cellar on a double-forked wooden rail, and one barrel fell on his heart. He was taken to Budapest, but he died there, and was brought back by train.

I know he's buried in a casket in Nagykaroly, because only this could be closed hermetically for transport. My mother had a very hard life: she remained a widow with three children in 1917, but fortunately they had a store manager who managed the whole business.

My mother refused to marry again, but my grandfather and mother used to go to Vienna, and there she met a man from Vienna, Istvan Erdos, a 'Hochstapler' [German for 'swindler']. He was a tough guy, and my grandfather was ecstatic about him, as he was a great talker.

So my mother married him, but then he ruined her completely. Back then we still had our grocery store, and Istvan sold the entire company, squandered all the money and then took off. We went bankrupt because Istvan Erdos sent everything to his ex-wife and daughter.

He was Ilus Erdos' father, who later became an actress, and robbed us of our small fortune. Suddenly we realized we had nothing: no store, nothing, because that man had squandered everything. I was five or six, I don't remember whether I was going to school then.

Fortunately, my family was very kind and we still had the house which we were living in. Grandfather Schongut paid off our debts, and thus we managed to keep our house in Nagykaroly. But otherwise we had nothing. A Jewish tragedy. Shortly after, my mother got divorced. After that my uncles, Erno and Emil, helped us by sending us 100 pengos or so every month.

Our house was very long. Outside there were stores which were only accessible from the outside. And after the grocery store went bankrupt, we rented out the store. There was a skin-dealer, Karoly Karolyi, who rented it. Later, immediately after the skin-dealer, there was another store, a smaller one, owned by my elder sister before she got married, called the Hattyu [Swan] general store.

They sold stockings, gloves and the like. In the meantime, my sister got married to Szatmar, and the store was closed, and then it was rented to someone else.

Another tenant was Gozner, who owned a men's wear store, in the same period when the Hattyu general store was there. He had two sons, one of them died young, while the other, Eli [Elek], was a doctor. Another tenant was Olga Kefes' husband, a jeweler.

The apartment was inside, on one side of the yard. We had three rooms, a kitchen and bathroom. It wasn't furnished, but later my poor mother made a tin bathtub. Next to it there was a boiler where we used to heat the water with wood. We had a light violet bedroom, with curtains and overlay made of thick silky material. It was beautiful!

On the other side of the yard, behind the stores, there was a wooden shed for each store. Then there was a tapestry-manufactory, with a 'szenapad' upstairs [Editor's note: that's how they called 'szenapadlas' – hayloft – in that region]. On the side of the hayloft there were two dark toilets, without windows, nothing but electric lighting.

They only consisted of a cesspit, which was emptied from time to time, not too often. The toilets had wide wooden seats. Later, my mother made a cement cesspit, God knows why. We used to go there, too, because we didn't have a normal toilet. It was a great thing when my mother made another separate toilet in the front, which had some more light.

On that side there were the servant quarters, room and workshops. Miklos Kepecs had a workshop there, he was a clock-maker. Back then there was another one, whose wife was Sari Kler. Poor him, he was called Schreiner or something like that, he had his face full of rashes and swellings, and scars left by smallpox. He looked horrible! He sold all kinds of things: electric appliances, light bulbs, bicycles and its accessories, etc. He had his store outside, but was able to make repairs, as well, because his workshop was in the yard.

Also in the yard there was the workshop of eyeglassed Kuki, who repaired bicycles and machines. Then he disappeared somewhere, I don't know where. He had a crippled wife, but they were kind and honest. And then there was a cobbler, Roth, and an upholsterer, Karoly Swartz.

They were all really nice people. Simple, but honest. Next to the workshops there was our kitchen and the larder, and then came the photo studio. The studio had a huge glass partition. Originally this was the back end of the store, and the photographer converted it into a studio after he came there. The store had two cellars, but they were separated, and had concrete floor, not a dirt one. One cellar was in the front and the other in the back, under the darkroom of the studio.

The entrance door was wooden and huge. It was made of massive wood so that people couldn't see inside. To get more rent, Srajner made a store at the entrance, and the entrance door became half its original size. The house is still there, with the half door.

The yard was completely paved with large stones of different sizes, quite erratically. As long as I was there it was in the same condition. And in the middle there was a large, round flower-bed, and on one side, next to the studio there was a locust tree, and on the other a chestnut tree.

There was a poultry-house in the yard, too, and there was always chicken, hen, ducks and geese. We didn't really buy geese, they were too big for us, as we were only women in the family. I

remember everything clearly! I wouldn't dare go back there, although I would like to go to see Nagykaroly again. My grandson Sorin said he would take me there, but I have my mind set, and that's that. Why take a chance? I'm happy the way I am.

A Jewish girl, Juliska, was the housekeeper, and there were servants: a cook and housemaid, who helped her out. After we went bankrupt, we married off Juliska to Elek Stark from Kiralydaroc, just to get rid of her. We didn't have to pay her, she was considered my grandmother's foster-child, but my grandmother used her as a servant. Juliska was a maid-of-all-work, but she was very decent, and loved us very much While we still had the store, there was an assistant called Juliska, too.

She was an extremely kind person, we named her Boltika [in English it would be something like 'Shoppy'], because she served in the shop. She became Mrs. Turoczi. Her descendants still live in Nagykaroly. She was Christian, but the Jews and Christians got along well then. Then there was a very old cook, Aunt Schiff. Her son lost his leg in World War I, so he walked with a stick. Aunt Schiff did the cooking, but we had no money to pay her, so she left us.

Before my mother's second husband ruined us, we also had a coachman for a while. We had a horse called Sarga [Yellow]. The horse and carriage were both yellow. It was a very interesting carriage, not a britzka, but a very large and comfortable carriage.

Two people could sit on the main seat, plus maybe a little child on someone's lap, and opposite to this there was another seat. They called it the small seat, as little children used to sit there, like me [for example]. And in the front there was the driver's seat, where Miklos, the coachman, used to sit. He pronounced his name 'Miklosz, Miklosz.' He came from Russia. During World War I many Russians remained in Nagykaroly. He learnt Hungarian and got married in Nagykaroly.

Despite the fact that we were poor, we had a servant. Her name was Teri, and she had a separate room in the yard. There was a man who lived with her, I don't remember his name, but he was terrible. He used to beat Teri all the time, but she never complained.

We had a German governess for 14 years. Her name was Otilia Passon, and she had three brothers. Her father was an engine driver, who was originally from Katowice [today Poland], called Ludwig Passon. Oti was an extremely kind person.

She was blonde, as she used to peroxide her hair, because originally she was a brunette. They spoke German with us at that time. But later she learnt fluent Hungarian, and then we spoke Hungarian in our house. She did everything around the house. She was a very religious Roman Catholic.

It was impossible for her to miss the Sunday services. Once, when she went to the service, she wore very tight shoes. The shoes pinched her so much that she fainted. All this because she wanted to be smart, so she bought small, tight shoes.

They revived her, and she must have been coming back home limping or she carried her shoes in her hand, I don't know. But I do know that it was quite a story that Oti had fainted in the church. My mother married her off in Maramarossziget, to an older man called Sandor Valian.

He was a matchmaker, he made a match for my grandfather, and that's how she knew him. He was an honest and decent man. Oti got married at Christmas 1930. When I ended up here in

Maramarossziget, in the sixth or seventh grade, in 1931-32, she was already here. Both of them passed away, their graves are here.

My elder sister, Anci [Anna Kaufmann] was born on 11th September 1906. She was a very decent and serious person. Once she got a terrible rash on her face, nobody knew what had caused it. Then she moved to Budapest for approximately six months.

She was around 15 then, and they managed to heal her there. First she lived with one of my uncles, Erno Schongut, who was a doctor, but after a while his wife didn't allow her to stay there anymore. She was extremely jealous because my sister was on very good terms with her uncle.

They had a genuine relationship as relatives. My aunt misunderstood their relationship, because Uncle Erno liked Anci very much, but just as family, not the other way; he was too decent for that. I guess it's typical for women to be concerned about their husbands.

So my sister rented a room. In the meantime she learned corset-making as at that time women used to wear corsets. Then she came home and sewed corsets; she even earned some money. But then they became out-of-date, so then she made bras. She was very skillful.

Her sewing-machine is still here. It's an industrial machine, made by the Neumann company. It still functions splendidly, but I don't use it anymore. We bought it on hire-purchase then. Oh, life was an agony! The sewing-machine returned its value, because she worked beautifully, and was very skillful. Women used to come to our house and my sister custom-made the orders.

Anci got married on 7th April 1935. It was an arranged marriage. Her husband was called Bertalan Fuchs, he was a railway official, originally from Szatmar. His parents lived in Szatmarnemeti. Berti had a sister in Budapest, and her husband was Gyula Fabian, an engineer.

They had a very tragic life, because their six-year-old daughter died of leukaemia. Lili was a very decent person. When I went to Budapest, I visited them, and she served me a meal for free, although she was poor. But I was poor, too. My sister had her civil marriage in the morning, and the religious marriage at 1pm, because their train was bound to set off sometime in the afternoon; they went for their honeymoon to Debrecen [today Hungary].

They had their religious marriage at home: they brought a four-legged chuppah to the house, made from claret-colored velvet, interwoven with spun gold. Everything was kept very simple: only the rabbi, shochet, Berti's parents and our family attended the ceremony.

Then they had to throw a dinner at home. After the wedding we bought a house for Anci in Szatmar. The house was on Jokai Street, in the clerks' district. My two uncles from Budapest paid for it. They were really nice. After the wedding my sister continued to work. At first they were in Nagykaroly, then they moved to Szatmar after they had bought a house there.

They then moved to Krajova [Craiova in Romanian, situated in Dolj county], because my brother-in-law was transferred there. They had a very nice life. My brother-in-law was a fair, honest and very decent person. Their daughter was born on 22nd September 1937.

She was beautiful! She had silky, auburn hair. On the top of her head her hair was cannon-curled; her mother used to roll up her hair in paper so she could sleep and for it not to be too hard, and in

the morning, when she unwrapped it, it was standing. In 1940, when it was again the Hungarian era 6, they hurried back to Nagykaroly. I wish they had remained in Craiova! If they had stayed there, they wouldn't have been deported.

My second eldest sister, Manyi [Margit Kaufmann], was born on 26th June 1910. She had a Christian suitor, Micu Fluch [Miklos Fluch]. He was a charming, blond boy, and was originally from a reduced gentry family. He was a sweet young gentleman.

He had a sister, Iren Fluch, later Mrs. Pecsi and she had a daughter, Kati, who was very ugly. The eldest brother, I don't remember his name, was a champion runner. Micu used to come to our house with flowers. I remember the others made up a poem, 'Manyi, Micu's eyes are shining.'

Because they saw how in love they were. In the same circle of friends there were also Feri Niedelmann and Pisti Niedelmann. They were my elementary school teacher's sons. I don't know about Pisti, but Feri was older than my sister. Feri was very bright, he became a writer. Pisti was bright, too, and handsome, and I think I met him after the war, he was in Nagykaroly, but then he moved to Szatmar. Pisti also became a writer or something like that. Anyway, they were all brains.

Back then the only way of relaxation was the promenade. People used to meet there and everyone used to go there on Saturdays and Sundays at noon. I was still little then. Not too little, because I used to stand at the door and watch the promenade. My siblings went there. They wore kid gloves then, made of smooth leather, not the shiny type, but smooth.

It was genuine leather. How would it look if someone walked on the promenade without wearing a hat on Sunday morning, when people used to come out of the Catholic and Reformed churches! Both Jews and Christians used to walk on the promenade.

We used to observe Sabbath, and the Christians observed it as well. [Editor's note: Markus Klara here refers to the fact that Christians used to respect the Jewish holidays, including Sabbath, of course.] They met on these occasions and ogled to each other and flirted.

Back then [1920s, 1930s] there was no such thing that one is a Jew, and the other a Christian. It was natural that Manyi was with Micu. I don't mean they lived together, not at all, because Micu was too considerate for something like that. It was also natural, for example, that we bought pork at the butchery.

Or, for that matter, if a Christian slaughtered a pig, they always sent us some. On Purim we used to send them pastry, as we did with many people. Later, the Fluchs moved to Hungary, after the Romanians came in [during the period after the Trianon Peace Treaty 7, after 1920], and they didn't hire Hungarians for work, and Micu wasn't able to find a job. Micu had to leave and we all wept so much. Micu and Manyi loved each other so much. I don't know what happened to him after that.

Manyi learned photography when she was 18-19. There was a photographer called Schmidt Fridrich in the yard, and that's where she started. Schmidt was a very decent man. His wife called him Fritzl. His wife drank heavily, she was German, but she drank like a fish.

Poor Schmidt died suddenly and his wife moved to Prague [today Czech Republic] to her younger sister. Then Koziarszky took over the photo studio. Koziarszky was foolish, a bohemian, but

otherwise very honest, and a real gentleman. We didn't have enough money to buy Manyi a camera, we were poor.

She took and touched up pictures, and the boss used to take her to weddings and different events to take pictures. Back then they had those old-type cameras, covered with a black cover and put on a tripod, they used to put the plates in and took the pictures on these plates.

The photographer had assistants, young boys, one of them was called Torok, who used to carry the equipment and helped out. The external wall which gave in to the yard, was made of glass, and next to the door, on the right, there was the darkroom for developing the pictures, and on the left was the studio, with a very large white background for taking pictures, and some tables where the assistants used to touch up.

The photographers were very nice people, and didn't exploit their workers, but paid them a decent wage. My poor sister helped us out with her pay, instead of saving it or buying some clothes or something for herself. She put it all into the family's budget.

Margit's marriage was an arranged one too, she got married in September 1935. Her husband, Andor [Bandi] Moskovits, was a clerk at a saw-mill near Marosvasarhely, at Lunca Bradului [its Hungarian name is Palotailva]. Back then it was something to be a clerk!

He was originally from Tasnad [47km south-east of Nagykaroly]. He had an elder sister who got married in Hungary to a Christian, Bubi Barany. As far as I remember they lived in Budapest, and had no children. Manyi's wedding also took place in accordance with the Jewish tradition, under a chuppah, just like Anna's wedding.

The costs were covered by my uncles, again. Where would we find the money to bring together ten men? According to the Jewish religion, there have to be at least ten men, called a minyan, for the prayer, and also for the wedding. And these ten men had to be well-treated.

Manyi and her husband didn't last together for very long. There was no argument, nothing, they just didn't love each other. Well, it had to be something that didn't work out. Then my sister returned to Nagykaroly and continued to work as a photographer.

My sisters were loving and honest people. They weren't jolly, they were rather serious, because life treated them that way. Both my sisters finished elementary school and attended the Jewish school, and also four years of middle school. They didn't graduate.

However, they educated themselves, spoke German and French, so they had the required liberal education. We had a piano at home, and my mother and sisters played the piano very well. The elder one sang and played the piano, while Manyi only played the piano, beautifully.

I didn't want to learn because I hated the teacher, Ms. Dudus: her real name was Julia Jakobovits. I didn't like her because she always teased me, when I was a child, with the boys and this and that, and I didn't like it. So, unfortunately, I stopped learning to play the piano, and don't know how to play it, just because I didn't like the teacher.

She was an older lady, a very distinguished, but also very hysterical person. She had an artist hair-style, short and bushy, and dark brown. Her face was also peculiar, anyway, you could see that she

was an artist. Manyi used to go to the music school in Szatmar, to Mr. Bendiner, he was the headmaster of the school, but only for two years, and she didn't finish it.

- **Growing up**

As for myself, I was actually born on 31st December 1913, but was registered on 1st January 1914, so I gained a year in one night. We didn't really have toys, we only had some rag-dolls; we weren't spoiled because our family wasn't rich, and we were happy to have our daily bread.

When I was little, we didn't go to Maramarossziget, we only started to visit our family later. We used to come here in the summer, because Grandfather Schongut lived here. My mother used to come each year to her mother's grave. I don't remember for how long we stayed, but it wasn't for very long.

We used to stay at Uncle Imre's house. He usually gave us two sacks of flour each year, this was as much as we could get from the bakery. We used it to bake bread at home, or we took the flour to a bakery in Nagykaroly on Wesselenyi Street, and baked the bread there. I remember there were very large pieces of bread.

Anci used to go to Cegled to spend her summer holidays, with our cousins. We kept in touch with our relatives. She gained some weight there, because when they ate they always sent her to the kitchen for something, 'Go to the kitchen and bring this! Bring a spoon, bring this or that.'

And they used to put some more food on her plate. She thought she had left the food on her plate and ate it, and it was terrible how much weight she put on. They laughed at her because she didn't notice the others were putting more and more food on her plate. When she came home, she was very fat. I didn't visit them, because they were older than me: Magdi was eight years older, she was the same age as my sister, while Kati was even older.

I remember Queen Mary and [King] Ferdinand 8 visited Nagykaroly once. [Editor's note: Queen Mary, the wife of Ferdinand of Hohenzollern, the Romanian King, was the granddaughter of Queen Victoria, the British Queen. During World War I she was the dowager of the Romanian Red Cross, and after the death of her husband Ferdinand in 1927, she became one of the three regents of her underage son, King Carol II 9.

She was very respected among the people.] They passed through there. King Ferdinand used to travel around the country and was very popular: the people liked him very much. He was much older than Mary. Mary was willing to do anything for her country, and she developed very close relationships with great diplomats just to save her country.

Apart from that, Mary liked men very much. She was beautiful. She had beautiful blond hair with a huge blond knot. They were on a chariot, and we stood at the edge of a ditch and watched them. I think I was five or six then.

There were many Jews in Nagykaroly, but it was more like a Hungarian town, and the Jews were magyarized, as well. The Swabians were another story, but Jews were assimilated to a very large extent: they didn't speak Yiddish, their mother tongue was Hungarian.

At home even the Orthodox Jews spoke Hungarian [see Orthodox communities] 10, except the Teitelbaums, who spoke Yiddish. They were the wigged, orthodox Jews, and were very religious. Then there were the ‘hejas’ Jews, who were very religious, but didn’t wear a wig, and then there were the Neologs, just like us.

[Editor’s note: the name comes from the fact that women had hair, i.e. they were haired: ‘hej’ or ‘haj’ means hair, ‘hejas’ means haired. Klara has no knowledge of any other place where they use this expression.]

The haired were more civilized and enlightened. They were half-Orthodox, and the women let their hair grow and had long hair, of course. Well, they weren’t as religious as the Orthodox, but more observant than the Neologs. The men didn’t wear caftans, they dressed normally. They had a specific black hat though, with a small rim.

On weekdays, they used to go to the synagogue in the mornings and evenings, then on Friday afternoons and twice on Saturdays. The Roths were haired Jews. They were a wealthy trader family, but very nice, extremely honest people.

The Neologs only went to the synagogue on Fridays and Saturdays, they had an entirely different approach. There were amongst them people who had a kosher household, but most of them didn’t observe the religion, only in the measure we did, i.e. we only went to the synagogue on high holidays. They dressed normally, European style, as the rest.

Only the more religious Neolog women wore genuine lace shawl, made of expensive Brussels lace, at least those who could afford it. This was a long and wide shawl, and they either tied it or just put it on. On high holidays they wore white lace shawls, but some of them didn’t have any lace, I mean the poorer ones.

My mother had a lace shawl. The difference in the clothing of women was that the religious ones, haired and Orthodox alike, were only allowed to wear long sleeved and long necked long dresses, while the Neologs were allowed to wear short sleeved dresses.

There were three synagogues. One of them was the Orthodox temple, which still exists as a monument, and those who went there were very religious. The other was ours, the Neologs’, and the chief rabbi was Dr. Lazar Schonfeld. He had many children and a fat wife.

This was the largest synagogue. It was beautiful and large, with a second floor, where women used to sit. Upstairs there was a plaited grid. The Orthodox Jews had their grid made from wood, and the Neologs from plastic, so one could see through much easier. The haired had a prayer house, but I don’t remember who their rabbi was.

The Orthodox rabbi was Teitelbaum, son of the Teitelbaum from Sziget. His name was Joel Teitelbaum, and people called him Jajris. His family was a very serious and religious one. He had two daughters, Hanele and Ruhala. Hanele was the elder one; she got married, but had no children.

They were very observant and wanted to have a child, but they didn’t succeed. The other one, who was younger, got married at 17 to a Teitelbaum, one of her cousins, because they used to get married very young. She became pregnant, but had an extra-uterine pregnancy, and since they were very religious, she didn’t go to see a doctor and died, the poor thing.

I remember when the Teitelbaums moved to Nagykaroly, it was very interesting because they came with a regular horse carriage, which had a top, but it wasn't in place, and people were very happy to touch the carriage Teitelbaum was sitting in, because he was considered a saint. He was very religious.

People used to go to him for advice, for their business or other matters. He was incredibly bright. People took his words very seriously; anything he said was taken for certain. The Neolog rabbi was a different story. He wasn't that sacred, but he also was a very nice and bright man, and used to give good advice as well, but Teitelbaum was a wonder.

Many Christians visited him, and he never refused anybody; it wasn't like today, where a sacred rabbi was treated accordingly. He had bocherim, future rabbis, 15 or 20 people, and they always had lunch there.

Teitelbaum and his followers, the very observant Jews, wore caftans, yellow fur hats made of marten, because they were only allowed to wear genuine fur. Women wore wigs; they had to shave their hair and to wrap a shawl round their heads, but only a dark shawl.

Neolog and Orthodox Jews had a separate mikveh. The haired used to go to the Neolog mikveh. The difference of the Orthodox mikveh was that there was a person who submerged anyone who went there to bathe three times. Only the Orthodox had this ritual. I didn't go to any of the mikves, nor did my mother or sisters, because we always used to bathe at home.

This ritual was important for the men, they had to go there each week on Friday afternoons. [Editor's note: According to the prescriptions, married women had to go to the mikveh after their period.] Back then only a few people had bathrooms at home, so they used to go there to bathe. There were separate tubs, but those were more expensive, and there was a common pool in each bathhouse.

There was room for everyone, and it was peaceful, there was no rivalry among the Jews. Every religion got along well with each other in Nagykaroly. There were Roman Catholics, Reformed, Orthodox, Russians; there was a separate Russian Orthodox church and Greek Catholics.

We had a German maid who used to go every Sunday to the service, and it was natural for us that she went to her church, we didn't have anything against it. For example, there were Christians who used to go to the synagogue on Yom Kippur, saying that God appreciated it if they were going. They said their prayers, but they respected the other religion.

We only went to the synagogue when the maskir took place. The maskir is when Jews pray for the dead. My father died in 1917, and there was a great gathering then. It takes place on each high holiday; Yom Kippur, Pesach, etc. [Editor's note:

On the pilgrimage holidays, Pesach, Shavuot, Sukkot and Yom Kippur, people used to pray for the dead.] Women don't have to go to the synagogue. There are the very religious women who go, but only men have to be there on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings.

On Saturday afternoons the Havdalah takes place, when Sabbath is departing. I only remember that there was a bowl with some water in it, people used to dip their hands into it and put water on everyone's head; they said a blessing, at home, if there was a man in the house, otherwise it

wasn’t valid. I don’t remember whether my father used to do it, because I was too young then, but someone did it, although I don’t know who it was. This was the ritual on Saturday evenings.

My mother and the others started off being kosher, but later, after we went broke, they discontinued this. We never slaughtered a pig, but we never refused sausage, for example. We also used to buy pork, because it was cheaper than beef. Long ago we used to make cholent, but later gave up this habit. It had to be put in pots and taken to a bakery, only this way it had a good taste.

The baker and his assistants were Jewish. On Friday afternoons we took the pots there. The stove, it was a huge stove, just like they used to have in the bakeries, was heated up by then, and the next day it was ready [cooked]. We then went to collect it. On Fridays there was cholent all over the place, both Neologs and Orthodox took their cholent here.

On Fridays and Saturdays they didn’t cook anything else. But if we weren’t kosher anymore, on the basis of the community leadership’s disposition, the baker wasn’t allowed to take our pots with cholent, so we gave up this tradition. On Pesach, the bakeries used to bake matzah.

But there was matzah made with machines, as well, and in Israel these are still in use, and there was the other type of matzah, a thicker one, which was smooth and made of darker flour. The haired and observant Jews didn’t eat the matzah made in a factory, they had the one the baker made from unleavened batter.

We observed Pesach, but only with Jewish, yeast-free matzah. And on these occasions we used to give matzah to the Christians. And how happy they were! When we gave them the matzah, they said, ‘Oh, goody, how nice that you brought some!’ I don’t like matzah, it has no taste.

And I don’t know why Christians like it. Long ago, when I was still little, there were separate utensils for Pesach, which we had to bring down from the attic. I remember we had to change the utensils. After eight days we put them back and brought down the others. We sold flour and the like, but only to close acquaintances, for example, the servants who were in the house.

We sold it at a symbolic price, and then bought it back for twice that price. [Editor’s note: Klara refers to the form of chametz: the chametz products were sold symbolically or literally to non-Jews, and they used to get or buy them back after Pesach.]

I think before Purim there was the kapores, when a hen must be whirled over the head; women do it with a hen, and men with a cock. [Editor’s note: Klara remembers this incorrectly, because the kapores expiation ritual is before the morning of Yom Kippur.]

The kapores is the sacrifice made for someone’s sins, which is the hen [or cock, respectively]. We used to do this when we were kids, in the kitchen. But I was still a child and was afraid, so they helped me. I had to hold the hen, and my mother helped me. We had to say something in the meantime, ‘Let this be the sacrifice...’, but in Yiddish, I don’t remember anymore. Then the hen had to be taken to the shochet.

On Purim, the grown-ups also used to dress up in different clothes, fancy dresses. On this occasion we had the custom to send plates of pastry to our acquaintances, especially the Christians, because they were always looking forward to Purim and everyone had some good friends who were Christians.

We used to get some, as well. The custom was to cook several types of pastries. These were dry cakes, pastries with chocolate and yellow cookies. Then we had the framed puszerli, which was really exquisite. It was made as follows: the egg white had to be whipped to a mousse, then they added the egg yolk, sugar, flour, then cut it to small, flat pieces and cooked it. It was called puszerli because it created its own frame. It was very delicious, it melted in the mouth!

On Easter the Christians used to send us some delicious pastries: crumbly cake with nut or poppy seed filling. This was mandatory. They rolled out the batter, put the filling on it and rolled it over. But it wasn't a milk loaf, because it was made with baking powder and not with yeast.

People used to come to sprinkle my sisters with water. Sprinkling was an important thing then. [Editor's note: Sprinkling is a national Easter custom. This custom was thought to be an ancient fertility and cleaning ritual, this is why girls and women were sprinkled with water. It takes place on the second day of Easter: on Easter Monday. This custom is dying now.]

They used to carry perfume and poured a bit on the girl's head. The villagers and servants were watered with a bucket. When we had money, we had to paint red eggs, because if someone came they had to be given something.

Although we were Jews, we used to observe Christmas, especially because of the German maid we had, as she was extremely religious. The jewry from Nagykaroly used to observe the Christian holidays, while the Christians observed the Jewish holidays. And Christmas was so angelic in our house, with so much devotion! It was beautiful!

We decorated the Christmas tree, but later we only had money for a small tree. We used to decorate it with Christmas candy and nuts, but it was so small we couldn't use much. We always had servants and my mother used to give them presents, depending on what they needed: stockings, blouses or sweaters.

But we [the children] didn't get any presents, because we were poor and had just enough that we could give something to the servants. On Christmas it was again important to have crumbly cake with nut or poppy seed filling.

I finished the four grades of elementary school in a Jewish school, a Neolog one, because both the Orthodox and haired had their own elementary schools. But then after elementary school there was no Jewish school, i.e. middle school, I could attend, only the Jewish middle school in Nagyvarad.

In the Jewish school we were surely at least 15 in a class, boys and girls mixed. We learnt the Latin alphabet in Hungarian and learnt one or two prayers in Hebrew, such as the morning prayer, but later, as far as I remember, we had to say the prayers in Romanian. In the morning we said the morning prayer, and at noon, when we came out, we also had a prayer.

In the first grade our teacher was Mrs. Niedermann. She was a very charming lady. Then we had a teacher called Riesenbach, but he taught us only from the third or fourth grade. He used to give us 'kormos' if we didn't know the lesson, or if we didn't sit right or misbehaved.

[Editor's note: 'Kormos' meant that the pupil had to put together his fingers and the teacher hit his fingertips with a stick.] He used to give us 'kormos', and it was such a disgrace! Then we had a teacher named Lisszer, who had a girl called Jolan Lisszer, and another teacher, Furt, who also had

a girl, Iren Furt.

These girls were very good friends. In elementary school I had a classmate called Aliz Davidovits, a very dear little person. I don't know what happened to her later. We spread to separate corners.

From the fifth grade [first grade of middle school] we learnt every subject in Romanian, but also some languages, German and French. We had an excellent Romanian and French teacher, Camelia Naom. Her husband had his legs amputated; he had fought in World War I.

Our geography and history teacher was Aurelia Fekete. These were two excellent teachers. I don't know which grade it was when we had a thin little book, but it was edited by Aliseanu Pop. I really liked this name. As far as I remember, we were studying the Romanian history.

Then I studied one year in private, because there was no middle school in Nagykaroly. My private tutor was called Ranedzay; he was Hungarian, and I hated the poor man so much I wasn't willing to study. He was a big, fat man with nose-glasses.

He wasn't severe, though, and was happy if he got lessons, since he was a private tutor. I only used to go to Szatmar for exams, but I don't know to which middle school. There were several examination teachers, but there was this one lady teacher called Niehtung.

She was extremely strict, she examined me in one discipline, but I don't remember which one. Then I went to Sziget, and attended the sixth and seventh grades in Domnita Ileana school, and graduated from there in 1932.

But back then it was quite something to be a graduate. In the first place, very few managed to get that far, and, furthermore, it was very difficult, so someone with a graduation diploma was considered highly educated. I graduated after seven, actually in total, eleven grades.

When I went to the middle school in Maramarossziget, I lived at Uncle Sandor's place for two years. He was my mother's older brother. Laci was already living in Paris by then. They had a four-room apartment with bathroom on Rozsa [Roses] Street. The house is still there. It was a luxury to have a bathroom then.

I liked Sziget because I had family there and they supported me; they were very nice. We didn't go to the synagogue too often. The children didn't, only the men used to go to the synagogue, women less, only on high holidays. However, I attended religion class. Our teacher was Dr. Samuel Danczig, the Neolog rabbi of [Maramaros] Sziget.

[Editor's note: Dr. Samuel Benjamin Danczig was the rabbi of the Neolog community between 1906 and 1944. (The Heart Remembers. Jewish Sziget, ed. by the Association of Former Szigetian in Israel, Havazelet Press, 2003).]

I don't know which university he had graduated from, but he finished a rabbi school, and was Dr. Danczig: he had a PhD title. He was a gentleman, an enlightened one. He had a small goatee, as far as I remember. He always wore a small kippah.

- **During the war**

After I graduated I went back to Nagykaroly and got a job. I worked at an insurance company called Generali, I was a typist. My boss was Roth, a Jew. Even back then one could insure his house, life, anything.

Then I ended up in Budapest, when Northern Transylvania was annexed to Hungary in 1940, according to the Second Vienna Dictate 11, because the insurance company went bankrupt and I had no prospect in Nagykaroly. I first got a job as a worker at an umbrella factory. The owners of the factory were my uncle's good friends. And my mother used to send me packages, even though they were poor.

Oh, God! I rented a room, because Uncle Erno's wife wouldn't let me stay with them under any circumstances. I stayed on Terez boulevard, at No. 50. I rented a room from Aron Berliner, a Jewish teacher. They were nice and honest people, his wife was much younger than him.

After a while it was impossible for me to stay there because it was outside the ghetto, and then I moved to Harsfa Street, to No. 57, with one of my girlfriends, Margitka. She was a friend of one of my relatives, the wife of Dr. Cukor Lajos, in Nagykaroly. This house was in the ghetto, at first it was a yellow star house.

I had already left the umbrella factory because the Jews had been fired because of the Anti-Jewish laws is Hungary 12. I had some spare money from my savings and lived on it. At first, we were only allowed to go out onto the street until 5pm.

Those were awful times, awful! Even before all this, Jews weren't distributed their mail, and my mother used to send me letters addressed to my uncle's servant, a Christian, who then handed me the letters. After the war, when I returned, the Berliners were still alive and I got my letters through them.

My mother, Anci, her husband and little girl, as well as my other sister were taken to the ghetto in Nagykaroly. The ghetto of Nagykaroly was on Wesselenyi Street.

I still have a letter my mother wrote on 4th May, the day they were taken to the ghetto: 'My dear, your letter has just arrived, we are moving today. We wrote to you yesterday, please don't be upset, but I wasn't able to write. Write to me briefly and you'll be informed about our whereabouts. God bless you and many, many hugs.' How nice!

My sister wrote on the other side of the card: 'My dear, I wrote you another letter yesterday. Our acquaintances have all moved out, and today we will as well, and I'll write you as soon as possible. Olga will write to you. Take care and write to Olga. Many hugs.' Olga was the wife of Janos Menesi, the photographer.

Olga was a photographer as well. They were very nice Hungarian Christians. Her husband's original name was Metz, but he magyarized it to Menesi after the war [World War II].

He rented the photo studio after Koziarszky. The studio was called 'Kelet fenykepeszeti muterem' [Orient photo studio]. Olga then wrote to me, but it was so risky! They deserved everything good, because they were very nice. On 13th May she wrote, 'Klarika, they have been put on trucks, on closed cargo trucks.

They will probably be taken to Szatmar. I don't know anything certain. They had food for the trip. They left me word that they will write to you. I'm not able to write to you because not only my soul, even my mind is aching. I would like to talk to you, but when?

You just write to me, and I will, too. If Jancsi gets well, he will look you up, as I wrote earlier. The town is empty now and the atmosphere is low-spirited. With love, Olga.' And how risky it was for her to write to me! How dear these people were!

They were taken to Szatmar and from there they were deported to Auschwitz. Unfortunately it was all carefully planned. Very few were exempted from Deportation in North Transylvania 13. In Nagykaroly there was only one man, called Zoli [Zoltan] Erstein, who made passports, and he was exempted, I don't know why. Europe's disgrace!

My brother-in-law told me that when they were deported, Mariska asked her mother, 'Why are we Jews?' They were still on a truck then. [Editor's note: Jews were deported from Szatmar on 19th, 22nd, 26th, 29th and 30th May, as well as on 1st June 1944, a total of 18,857 people.]

I received one more card in Budapest from my family, but it had been sent by the management of the camp. My family wrote, 'We are fine, and so on...', and they wrote Waldsee on it to mislead people, so they would think they were well off there.

[Editor's note: From the end of summer 1944 the women were left alive in the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp and were allowed to send a card to Hungary. The pre-written text was the same: I arrived in good health. I'm fine. With love... They were only allowed to sign and write the address.

The Nazis then wrote on it as sender location 'Waldsee', which sounded like a nice resort, and under it they wrote the following in Hungarian and German: Reply only on the card (max. 30 words) in German, via the Association of Hungarian Jews, Budapest, VII., Sip Str. 12. The name and birth date of the prisoner were also written on the card.]

Unfortunately, I don't have this letter anymore. Then, on 2nd October 1944, Olga wrote me another letter, 'Klarika, I received a dateless card from you.' I didn't write the date on it. 'I don't know when you wrote it. I already wrote to you why I'm not writing. I wrote you a long letter, though, and received no answer.

I still don't know anything about Manyi and the others, no matter how badly I wish I did.' Well, you'll never find people like this anymore! They were true Catholics, their belief in God was very strong. 'My husband is a soldier, but I don't know where.'

These were the people who gave me back our things, the little we had, when I returned home. They were Christians, and they had two children, Judit and Imrus; thank God they are still alive, they live in Szatmar, but their parents have passed away.

I was taken away from Budapest on 15th October 1944. First they took me to Dachau [today Germany]. This was the sorting place, we didn't work there, we were only taken to labor camps from there: Ravensbruck [today Germany], Spandau-Berlin [a suburb of Berlin, Germany], Oranienburg [sub-camp of Sachsenhausen in Northern Germany, 35km from Berlin].

I also remember that when our turn came to be gassed, they took us to the gas-chamber, but they ran out of gas. A woman came in and said, ‘Na das ist schon! Kein Gas mehr.’ [German for ‘How nice! We ran out of gas.’] We worked in an ammunition factory.

There was a very decent man, an old man, the master, who used to bring me some bread or something in secret. I don’t think that it was bread, but then what was it? I know he brought me something secretly. There were decent people even among them. I was liberated from Sachsenhausen.

The Russians came in, but we were like animals, we weren’t aware of anything, we were dazed, and later I found out that the Germans had been giving us bromide all that time, they put it in the tea and everything else. We didn’t even have our menstruation, and were sedated, so there was nothing to doubt or think about.

And only when the bromide wore off we woke up and realized what had happened. But even then we had no idea what was happening, because we remembered nothing.

- **After the war**

I said I wanted to go home, so they put me on a truck. We came home by train. I first got to Budapest, because my younger cousin Agi was there. She escaped the deportation because she had some documents, but she wouldn’t let me know, she kept it a secret even after the war.

Finally I arrived home to Nagykaroly on 11th September 1945. I couldn’t believe the reality, I lived in a dream-world, and couldn’t even imagine this had actually happened. I went home because I was convinced I would find my family there. I couldn’t imagine that something like this could happen in the middle of Europe, such a Holocaust.

I often wonder how people were killed just because they were Jews or Gypsies. This is awful! And it’s useless to say we have to forgive, it’s impossible. I, who came back and didn’t find my family, can’t forgive them, my family’s memory stops me from doing so.

I can’t forgive them for what they did to us, to burn healthy people alive, it’s inconceivable. It’s all the same now, no one can bring them back, but even so I say they watched over me from there. This has nothing to do with religion; I just felt it.

Everything was taken away from the house. We had beautiful furniture, a mahogany dinner-table, a white girl’s room and drab bedroom set. Apparently these were taken away by the Russians. When I arrived home, there was nothing there, the house was empty.

The neighbors weren’t too delighted that I had returned, because they had stolen everything. It showed that they weren’t happy to see me, because they thought I would reclaim my possessions. But I didn’t know what each of them had taken. The Menesis were there, though, a very decent family, they returned the jewels my mother hadn’t handed in to the Swabian Bank, because Jews had to give their jewels to this bank prior to their deportation, but left there.

The only one who came home from deportation was my eldest sister’s husband, Berci Fuchs. My brother-in-law was taken to forced labor from the ghetto, so he was separated from the family. He wanted to marry me right after the war, but I told him I couldn’t marry my sister’s widower.

Then he got married to a Christian woman, who was older than me, someone of his age and who he had a son with. I went to Sziget because I knew my cousins, Zsofi and Ocsi Schongut, were there. So I went to them. First they were happy to see me, but when I asked them to give me my mother's portion, they told me that my grandfather had helped my mother while she was a widow and they wouldn't let me have anything.

One afternoon we went to Dr. Dori Berger, she was my cousin Zsofi's sister-in-law. And my husband-to-be was also there. The instant he saw me he fell for me and we got married in one week, on 15th March 1946. This is the story of our encounter. We had a religious wedding with a rabbi, but I had no wedding dress or anything, there was no way I could have had one.

I didn't even have a white veil, instead I covered my face with a colored silk shawl, according to the Jewish tradition. My husband just put on the clothes he wore every day. When we came back, neither of us had anything, so how do you think we were dressed? We wore what we had, and they just brought the chuppah and put it somewhere in the yard. And that was it. There was no dinner, nothing, it wasn't like that then; we were happy to be alive and have something to eat.

I came home with the hope that I would find someone. But I came here, got married and my husband wouldn't hear of leaving for Israel or anywhere abroad. So we were stuck here. My cousins from Maramarossziget, Zsofi Schongut and Ocsi [Lazar] Schongut, are both living in Israel with their families.

As soon as it was possible they emigrated. I think they both emigrated in 1956. Exactly on Yom Kippur everyone ran out of the synagogue and signed up and requested for documents. They cared less about Yom Kippur, or anything for that matter, they just kept saying, 'Let's go, let's go!', the whole bunch left the synagogue and went to the police station to sign up.

I visited Israel only once, in 1971, by myself, and stayed there for six weeks. I stayed at my cousins', Zsofi and Ocsi's. Neither Ocsi, Zsofi, Cali [Zsofis' husband] or Lili [Ocsi's wife] had a diploma. I think Lili worked as a housekeeper somewhere, she used to cook, while Zsofi didn't work, she always managed to escape work, her husband did instead.

I only visited Haifa, they didn't take me to Jerusalem because they were poor, too. I've been to Israel, but I haven't seen Jerusalem. Back then it was a very primitive country and I wasn't impressed. They all struggled there. The only thing they had was freedom, but people were struggling and lived in very moderate means.

It was awful what I saw there, everything was very modest, and there was that silence. They all feared the Arabs. Everyone feared for their lives, they were even afraid to go out on the streets. It was something, that Israel. I don't know how things are going today, most certainly everything is quite different now.

My husband, Endre Markus, was born in 1901 in Maragyalufalva [today Giulesti, 15km from Maramarossziget], which included Aknasugatag [today Ocna Sugatag, 18km East of Maramarossziget]. His father was called Moricz, and was a doctor. He was 32 when my husband was born.

Moreover, his father, i.e. my husband's grandfather, was a doctor, too, he lived somewhere in Transdanubia, but I don't know where. My husband's mother, Sarolta Geiger, Sari, was 24 when

she gave birth to my husband. She was originally from Budapest, and was the descendant of a Transdanubian rabbi called Sam Seufeld.

But they lived in Aknasugatag, because my husband's father got a job there as local practitioner, and later they moved to Maramarossziget, and were deported. My husband had a little sister called Baba, but her real name was Elisabeth.

She got married in Poland. I don't know where this man saw Baba and fell for her. I think they lived in Warsaw [today Poland]. They had a daughter, Katherina, Kati, who was born there, and they all perished in Poland during the Holocaust.

My husband became a doctor, a urologist. He finished medical school in Vienna and lived there for a year as doctor, but then he came home and settled in Maramarossziget. My husband managed to survive because he was in forced labor camps between 1942 and 1945, he came as far as the Don.

When he came back, some Russians were living in his apartment, but they let him stay. There was a Russian officer, who was a doctor, and as doctors they became very good friends. This doctor lived with a woman called Margaretta, a Jew. Then they had to leave and so we got the house back.

In the meantime, after the Russians left, a man called Karpati moved in upstairs. He was a member of the SS. After the war he managed to get the authorities to declare him incapacitated or something, and he escaped this way, but he was an SS member. When me and my husband moved in, he was already there, but he was a genuine pig, because he used to hit the floor just to annoy us.

He was truly Anti-Semitic. We tried to avoid him, but he was always provoking us. He was Hungarian, but he considered himself a German, and later they emigrated to Germany. After he left there was no one else left in the house, and we had the house to ourselves. Later, the house was nationalized [see Nationalization in Romania] 14, because my father was an intellectual, and we had to fight quite a lot until we finally got it back in 1952, I think.

My husband was the manager of a home for the elderly, while I was a typist in a children's home. The boss was a very decent accountant, Mrs. Bilaniuc, Elena, or Lena. She was a very nice person, and still visits me from time to time. She is much younger, she is 74, but she looks 20.

She still dyes her hair, but she doesn't have one wrinkle, nothing. The manager was very decent, although he had been a member of the Iron Guard 15, but that was when he was 16-17, little did he know about it then, but then it was easy to recruit anybody. But he was despised because of his history with the Iron Guard.

Otherwise he was a nice, sweet, good man. His wife is still alive, and so are their two children. Then, on 7th January 1947, Babika [Marianna Markus] was born, and then I went back to work, until 1952, when my son Viktor was born, on 16th February. But I went back to work even after he was born. I retired in 1957.

Communism was a very odd thing, because they considered themselves communists, although there were the bosses who were leading, so there were different classes. [Editor's note: Klara refers to the Communist Party, to the fact that although they proclaimed social equality, within the party there existed subordination relationships.]

I too was a party member. Where I was working it was mandatory to be a party member, so they could fire anyone who was a kulak 16. When my husband was fired, I was fired, too, because I was the wife of a doctor, whose father, but grandfather were also doctors, who were living in Transdanubia, so it was a distinguished family with noble origins.

But I was so happy! People were so primitive then, those good old communists! They were so primitive you can't imagine! They thought everyone with a diploma was their enemy. A doctor must be a kulak. When my husband was kicked out from the Party, he was relieved from his duties, but still worked in the home for the elderly.

But they wrecked him, they ruined him mentally, because we were afraid all the time that he would be imprisoned. We couldn't sleep at night and thought the Securitate car would come for him anytime. I remember they came once, but they stopped in front of the third house; I don't remember who was living there, but they took them all in. And they didn't come for my husband because he was a doctor.

While the children were still small we used to celebrate Christmas at home. I used to buy a small Christmas tree, because Babika came home once saying, 'Well, everyone has a Christmas tree, little Jesus brought it, everyone has one, but me.' So I got one.

There were may children in this yard: The Marfics and Glid families, Mrs. Herskovits, and they were all Christians and had a Christmas tree. My husband didn't go watering on Easter, because of the communists, and back then these sort of things weren't really possible, people used to come here in secret.

And no one was allowed to come see me, because my husband was very jealous of anybody looking at me. If someone came to me then, if we had to, we returned the visit, but there was no social life then, really, because then you would have been considered a kulak, you know.

There was no theater in Maramarossziget, there was a cinema, though, but we never went there. Considering that my husband was a doctor, we hardly had any money. We were poor, and I had to work. We didn't go anywhere on summer holidays, it must have happened only once or twice that we went to Aknasugatag. [Editor's note: There's a salt bath in Aknasugatag.] We needed money for everything, and we had so little.

We weren't too religious even after we got married. We were normal people. I didn't have a kosher household, and didn't consider it important, because we had so little money. We were happy we had something to eat, and weren't in a position to choose between Jewish and Christian food.

We used to observe the high holidays. However, my husband didn't go to the synagogue on Friday evenings and I didn't light candles either, we only had to light candles at our wedding, and never did since then. I didn't observe these traditions, and, unfortunately, I didn't educate my children in this spirit.

We sent Viktor to cheder, and after he came home he wouldn't eat this, he wouldn't eat that, he only wanted to eat kosher meals, and all kinds of things. We weren't allowed to do this and that, and so I didn't let him go there anymore. I wasn't able to believe in these things, I don't like restrictions and sticking to something that belongs to the past.

These are only customs. I didn't really use to go to the [Jewish] community, because I didn't really have time, and I never was the religious kind. My husband used to go there; he was the president of the community for a while after World War II.

My daughter Babika went to the university in Iasi and graduated from the dentist faculty. She went to Iasi because then it was very difficult to enter university, and there were some other Jewish girls who wanted to go there: Itu, Eva and others.

And they tossed for places. So Babika got Jaszvasar [Iasi], the other Kolozsvar, while the third one got Bucharest. Babika met her husband in Jaszvasar, they even had their wedding there in a synagogue. Her husband is originally from Jaszvasar, his original name was Hari Burah, but he adopted my daughter's name.

Babika wouldn't give up her name, because this was such a tradition, and her great-grandfather was also called Markus and my son Viktor is also called Markus, so Hari became Markus. [Editor's note: They changed their name to Markus, Hari Markus is the president of the Jewish Community in Maramarossziget.]

They have a son, Sorin, who was born on 20th August 1971. He's a doctor in Nagykaroly. I have a great-granddaughter, Sorin's girl, Karin. She was born on 17th January 1998. She just started school. She lives in Romania with her mother, because Sorin got divorced.

My son's wife is Ileana Moldovan, she is Romanian. They have a son, Lior Alfred. He was born on 24th August 1986, he will graduate from high school this year. He's a beautiful child. They live with us in our house, downstairs.

My husband died on 11th February 1987, he is buried here in Maramarossziget. Then I moved upstairs to my daughter and left the ground floor to my son. My daughter wouldn't move downstairs, so I said I would prefer to live with my daughter rather than with my daughter-in-law.

Currently we observe the religion to the extent that we don't eat pork meat, never put sour cream on meat and never mix meat with dairy products. But we don't observe the rules like the 'strengen' [German for 'strict'] kosher Jews. I usually pray saying only prayers I make up.

I don't recite specific prayers. From the Jewish prayers I know the blessing of bread and wine. I know the Our Father in Hungarian, Romanian and French. I have a small picture of St. Antal, my lady-friend gave it to me, and I keep it among my photographs.

- **Glossary**

1 King Michael (b. 1921): Son of King Carol II, King of Romania from 1927-1930 under regency and from 1940-1947. When Carol II abdicated in 1940 Michael became king again but he only had a formal role in state affairs during Antonescu's dictatorial regime, which he overthrew in 1944. Michael turned Romania against fascist Germany and concluded an armistice with the Allied Powers.

King Michael opposed the "sovietization" of Romania after World War II. When a communist regime was established in Romania in 1947, he was overthrown and exiled, and he was stripped from his Romanian citizenship a year later. Since the collapse of the communist rule in Romania in 1989, he

has visited the country several times and his citizenship was restored in 1997.

2 Securitate (in Romanian: DGSP - Directia generala a Securitatii Poporului): General Board of the People's Security. Its structure was established in 1948 with direct participation of Soviet advisors named by the NKVD. The primary purpose was to 'defend all democratic accomplishments and to ensure the security of the Romanian Popular Republic against plots of both domestic and foreign enemies'.

Its leader was Pantelimon Bondarenko, later known as Gheorghe Pintilie, a former NKVD agent. It carried out the arrests, physical torture and brutal imprisonment of people who became undesirable for the leaders of the Romanian Communist Party, and also kept the life of ordinary civilians under strict observation.

3 Neolog Jewry: Following a Congress in 1868/69 in Budapest, where the Jewish community was supposed to discuss several issues on which the opinion of the traditionalists and the modernizers differed and which aimed at uniting Hungarian Jews, Hungarian Jewry was officially split into to (later three) communities, which all built up their own national community network.

The Neologs were the modernizers, who opposed the Orthodox on various questions. The third group, the sop-called Status Quo Ante advocated that the Jewish community was maintained the same as before the 1868/69 Congress.

4 Karlsbad (Czech name: Karlovy Vary): The most famous Bohemian spa, named after Bohemian King Charles (Karel) IV, who allegedly found the springs during a hunting expedition in 1358. It was one of the most popular resorts among the royalty and aristocracy in Europe for centuries.

5 Banks of the Danube: In the winter of 1944/45, after the Arrow-Cross, the Hungarian fascists, took over the power, Arrow-Cross commandos went round the protected houses of the Ujlipotvaros, a bourgeois part of Budapest, and took the Jews to the Danube and shot them into the river.

6 Hungarian era (1940-1944): The expression Hungarian era refers to the period between 30 August 1940 - 15 October 1944 in Transylvania. As a result of the Trianon peace treaties in 1920 the eastern part of Hungary (Maramures, Crisana, Banat, Transylvania) was annexed to Romania.

Two million inhabitants of Hungarian nationality came under Romanian rule. In the summer of 1940, under pressure from Berlin and Rome, the Romanian government agreed to return Northern Transylvania, where the majority of the Hungarians lived, to Hungary.

The anti-Jewish laws introduced in 1938 and 1939 in Hungary were also applied in Northern Transylvania. Following the German occupation of Hungary on 19th March 1944, Jews from Northern Transylvania were deported to and killed in concentration camps along with Jews from all over Hungary except for Budapest.

Northern Transylvania belonged to Hungary until the fall of 1944, when the Soviet troops entered and introduced a regime of military administration that sustained local autonomy. The military administration ended on 9th March 1945 when the Romanian administration was reintroduced in all the Western territories lost in 1940.

7 Trianon Peace Treaty: Trianon is a palace in Versailles where, as part of the Paris Peace Conference, the peace treaty was signed with Hungary on 4th June 1920. It was the official end of World War I for the countries concerned. The Trianon Peace Treaty validated the annexation of huge parts of pre-war Hungary by the states of Austria (the province of Burgenland) and Romania (Transylvania, and parts of Eastern Hungary).

The northern part of pre-war Hungary was attached to the newly created Czechoslovak state (Slovakia and Subcarpathia) while Croatia-Slavonia as well as parts of Southern Hungary (Voivodina, Baranja, Medjumurje and Prekmurje) were to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (later Yugoslavia).

Hungary lost 67.3% of its pre-war territory, including huge areas populated mostly or mainly by Hungarians, and 58.4% of its population. As a result approximately one third of the Hungarians became an - often oppressed - ethnic minority in some of the predominantly hostile neighboring countries. Trianon became the major point of reference of interwar nationalistic and anti-Semitic Hungarian regimes.

8 King Ferdinand I (1865-1927)

King of Romania (1914-1927). He supported Romania's engaging in World War I on the side of the Entante, against the Central Powers, thus putting the interest of the nation beyond his own German origin.
The disintegration of empires in the aftermath of the war made it possible for several provinces to unite with Romania in 1918, after a democratic referendum: Bessarabia (in April), Bukovina (in November) and Transylvania (in December). On 15th October 1922, Ferdinand was crowned king of the Great Romania at the Reunification Cathedral in Alba Iulia, a symbol of the unification of all the Romanian provinces under the rule of a single monarch.

9 King Carol II (1893-1953): King of Romania from 1930 to 1940. During his reign he tried to influence the course of Romanian political life, first through the manipulation of the rival Peasants' Party, the National Liberal Party and anti-Semitic factions.

In 1938 King Carol established a royal dictatorship. He suspended the Constitution of 1923 and introduced a new constitution that concentrated all legislative and executive powers in his hands, gave him total control over the judicial system and the press, and introduced a one-party system.

A contest between the king and the fascist Iron Guard ensued, with assassinations and massacres on both sides. Under Soviet and Hungarian pressure, Carol had to surrender parts of Romania to foreign rule in 1940 (Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the USSR, the Cadrilater to Bulgaria and Northern Transylvania to Hungary). He was abdicated in favor of his son, Michael, and he fled abroad. He died in Portugal.

10 Orthodox communities: The traditionalist Jewish communities founded their own Orthodox organizations after the Universal Meeting in 1868-1869.They organized their life according to Judaist principles and opposed to assimilative aspirations. The community leaders were the rabbis.

The statute of their communities was sanctioned by the king in 1871. In the western part of Hungary the communities of the German and Slovakian immigrants' descendants were formed according to the Western Orthodox principles. At the same time in the East, among the Jews of Galician origins the 'eastern' type of Orthodoxy was formed; there the Hassidism prevailed.

In time the Western Orthodoxy also spread over to the eastern part of Hungary. 294 Orthodox mother-communities and 1,001 subsidiary communities were registered all over Hungary, mainly in Transylvania and in the north-eastern part of the country, in 1896. In 1930 30,4 % of Hungarian Jews belonged to 136 mother-communities and 300 subsidiary communities. This number increased to 535 Orthodox communities in 1944, including 242,059 believers (46 %).

11 Second Vienna Dictate: The Romanian and Hungarian governments carried on negotiations about the territorial partition of Transylvania in August 1940. Due to their conflict of interests, the negotiations turned out to be fruitless. In order to avoid violent conflict a German-Italian court of arbitration was set up, following Hitler's directives, which was also accepted by the parties.

The verdict was pronounced on 30th August 1940 in Vienna: Hungary got back a territory of 43,000 km² with 2,5 million inhabitants. This territory (Northern Transylvania, Seklerland) was populated mainly by Hungarians (52% according to the Hungarian census and 38% according to the Romanian one) but at the same time more than 1 million Romanians got under the authority of Hungary.

Although Romania had 19 days for capitulation, the Hungarian troops entered Transylvania on 5th September. The verdict was disapproved by several Western European countries and the US; the UK considered it a forced dictate and refused to recognize its validity.

12 Anti-Jewish laws in Hungary: Following similar legislation in Nazi Germany, Hungary enacted three Jewish laws in 1938, 1939 and 1941. The first law restricted the number of Jews in industrial and commercial enterprises, banks and in certain occupations, such as legal, medical and engineering professions, and journalism to 20% of the total number.

This law defined Jews on the basis of their religion, so those who converted before the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919, as well as those who fought in World War I, and their widows and orphans were exempted from the law.

The second Jewish law introduced further restrictions, limiting the number of Jews in the above fields to 6 percent, prohibiting the employment of Jews completely in certain professions such as high school and university teaching, civil and municipal services, etc. It also forbade Jews to buy or sell land and so forth.

This law already defined Jews on more racial grounds in that it regarded baptized children that had at least one non-converted Jewish parent as Jewish. The third Jewish law prohibited intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews, and defined anyone who had at least one Jewish grandparent as Jewish.

13 Exemption from Deportation in North Transylvania: In March 1944, the Germans occupied Hungary and North Transylvania. After the occupation, the openly Nazi-friendly and anti-Semitic Dome Sztojay formed a government, and a series of anti-Jewish laws were introduced.

The law for ghettoization of Hungarian Jewry made exceptions in certain cases. The sphere of exemptions was defined in a decree on 10th May 1945. The widows and children of those Jews who received a high commendation for bravery in World War I, or those widows and children of Jews who disappeared or died a hero's death in World War II as soldiers (not during 'work service' in the Labor Battalions) were exempted. Foreign Jewish citizens living in Hungary were also an exception.

There were other modes of escaping deportation. Rezso Kasztner, Zionist leader from Kolozsvar, exemplified this when he secured the release of 1300 Hungarian Jews (250 of which were Kolozsvar families) as a result of negotiations with Adolf Eichmann.

The North-Transylvanian Jews' other means of escape was to flee to Romania, and hide there with Christian help.

Three doctors played a major role in hiding Kolozsvar Jews: Imre Haynal, Dezso Klimko and Dezso Miskolczy, offering help through their exaggerated diagnoses and extra-extended treatments. In spring 1944, the clinic of Imre Haynal hid and sheltered a number of Jews, the greater part of his 'intensive care' ward were Jews fleeing deportation, since the expulsion of the seriously ill was often overlooked by the authorities.

14 Nationalization in Romania: The nationalization of industry and natural resources in Romania was laid down by the law of 11th June 1948. It was correlated with the forced collectivization of agriculture and the introduction of planned economy.

15 Iron Guard: Extreme right wing political organization in Romania between 1930 and 1941, led by C. Z. Codreanu. The Iron Guard propagated nationalist, Christian-mystical and anti-Semitic views. It was banned for its terrorist activities (e.g. the murder of Romanian Prime Minister I. Gh. Duca) in 1933.

In 1935 it was re-established as a party named Totul pentru Tara, 'Everything for the Fatherland', but it was banned again in 1938. It was part of the government in the first period of the Antonescu regime, but it was then banned and dissolved as a result of the unsuccessful coup d'état of January 1941. Its leaders escaped abroad to the Third Reich.

16 Kulak (Chiabur in Romanian):. Between 1949-1959 peasants in Romania, who had 10-50 hectares of land were called kulaks, those who owned more than 50 exploiters. Their land was confiscated.

They were either expelled from their houses and deported to the Baragan Steppes and the Danube Delta, where they had to work under inhuman conditions, or they were discriminated in every possible way (by forcing them to pay impossibly high taxes, preventing their children from entering higher education, etc.).