Title	Her story - my story
Word Count	3514 words

On the 30th of December I left urgently the skies of Paris, to reach the bed of my mother in Israel.

At quarter to three am, exactly, on the 1st of January 2016 she left us all... the form of the open arms of the clock draw in my mind a form of a cross...

I hope she reached the skies of eternity.

A chillingly cold day… we were many to honor her last road... The skies were filed with rain... they are rare the grey days in the Middle East....

For 2 weeks after I could touch all her belonging, reach into her life via her papers, drawings, notes, fabrics, books, objects, photos... get to know her...

Her smell was left tengiable, her fingure prints too , her marks were everywhere... I could tenderly grasp them... but she was not

...as if we have gained two more weeks together.

She was a strong woman. she never studied in school...Jewish kids were not allowed to attend schools back than in Europe... Yet she spoke 6 languages, Read 3 books a week.

Loved and guided by a generous spirit…Always independent...Worked and created... Strong and stubborn... once an while very hard but always soft...

She survived the Shoah... but never hated the other...

3 days before she left us she planted a young tree in her garden... a clementine tree.

This tree may go on with her live to life.

Back in Paris I found her story in her old papers,

she wrote:

I am 82 years and 8 months old. I was born on the 6th of April 1933, in Galatz, Romania. I am the widowed mother of two children. My parents were Rosa and Isaac. My little sister, who lives in Los Angeles, in the U.S.A., is Mirella. My mother's brother was Gico. My husband,

deceased, was Joel, a Holocaust survivor. He was the first camera man for Kol Israel. He died in 1981.

When I was six years old, in 1939, my family ran away from Bucharest to **Czernowitz** in Romania. The Green Shirts were looking for my father. The Green Shirts were like the SS in Germany. They were called Legionnaires. They arrested Jews, and anyone else they didn't like, and killed them.

When the German army arrived in **Czernowitz,** the Jewish people were dragged into a ghetto. For a few days we hid in a large house. It had a big attic in which my family, as other families, were able to hide. The house was outside of town, and we thought we would be safe there, but someone informed on us. As a result, we were put against a wall and the Germans said they would shoot us. I don't remember what was said, but after taking my family's money and that of the other families, we were taken to the ghetto and put into a room with other people.

One night we heard screams and gunshots. A few German drunks killed hundreds of Jews. This continued all night, and my parents were frightened they would come for us. Thank God they didn't.

One evening in 1940 or 1941, we woke up to shouting coming from the street. There were wagons pulled by horses. We dressed but didn't pack. My father tied a few warm things in a blanket, and within a few minutes we were ordered outside. It was cold and foggy. They took us to a train station and forced us to climb into a cargo car. We were so many inside, packed like sardines. There was no air. My father lifted me up to one of the two windows in the car, and I was able to breathe.

We arrived in Kiev, and luckily we all remained alive—my father, my mother, my mother's young brother, and me. In Kiev we were told to climb into horse-drawn wagons, and for two months we traveled deep into the Ukraine, which was under German occupation.

Before we started out, the Germans noticed that we still had gold—earrings, wedding rings, etc. We were ordered to give all the gold we had to a soldier who held out a helmet to collect it. One of the women tried to hide her ring, and as a result her hand was cut off. I remember I had a pair of little heart-shaped earrings. When the soldier came to our wagon, my mother handed him all our gold, including my earrings.

The trip was horrendous. There were dead bodies everywhere. I will never forget seeing the body of a naked woman lying on a black coat, disemboweled. We finally stopped in a village named Kuzmicz, at a school which was empty of pupils. Seventy of us were housed in one room. We slept on the bare floor in spoon-like fashion, so the heat of bodies close together kept us warm. Many things happened there. I contracted Bausch Typhus, and was very ill. My hair fell out and I was skin and bones.

One day, a bunch of German soldiers, unsteady on their feet (I now understand that they were drunk), shouted and ordered everyone outside. It was cold and snowing, and I was sick with fever. My father picked me up and ran around with me as ordered by the soldiers. Suddenly, an officer shouted to halt. He picked up a very pretty woman, put her in a car, and drove away. She was my mother's friend, married with two children. The following day he sent her back, and a soldier gave her husband a package—her girdle and panties. I didn't understand what it meant at the time. Her husband, who was a very violent and jealous man, accused her of enticing the officer. After this, the woman hung herself in the toilet.

My mother was broken hearted, and cried quite a lot. I understood that the officer had done something bad to her friend, but it was not until later that I understood that he had raped her. She was a beautiful woman with black hair and big black eyes. I shall always remember her.

One evening, a woman came and asked the commander of the school (he and the guards were Ukrainian) to take a few of the children for one night. She was a farmer's wife. Everyone was afraid, but we had no choice, and had to do as ordered. She chose seven children, me included, and took us in a carriage to her farm. There she undressed us and started to cry. We were skin and bones, and she kept repeating "Boge Moy, Boge Moy," which, I learned later, means "My God, my God." She filled a big wooden tub with hot water, and put all seven of us in it. She washed and dried us and fed us some soup. The next morning, she returned us—one kind soul amidst all the horrors we endured.

One day, the German commander asked for a volunteer to build a summer kiosk, and my father volunteered in return for some food. It was a beautiful kiosk, round, with a roof and benches all around and a round table in the middle. Later, in the middle of the night, two soldiers appeared and asked for Izak Schwartz. My father identified himself, and the soldier told him that the Commander had ordered him to go to the nearest town, called Copaigorot, to build another kiosk like the previous one.

My father said that he wouldn't go without his family. They wanted to shoot him. He said that they can shoot him, but he will not go without his family! After a short consultation with the Commander, they took us to the ghetto in Copaigorot. My father built kiosks for all the officers. This is what saved our lives, because all of the other prisoners were shot.

Two years later, the German army took us to Mogilev, a city on the Dnieper River, where we were once again put into a ghetto, which was huge. We were starving; the hunger was unfathomable. All the houses had been bombed and were exposed to the cold, so we were freezing as well.

The most important thing was to find food. My father's role was to find wood in the bombed houses. Once, he found a flat piece of iron, and with the aid of some old brick he made a stove. It was a very nice stove, and my mother would cook meat whenever we found some.

My father had gotten carpentry work, and asked the boss if he could take some sawdust. My father thought it would burn. When he came home, my mother said she would make porridge from it. She cooked it for a long time, added some sugar, and we thought it was the best food ever.

We didn't have salt, but we had a lot of sugar. Toward the end of the war, the Russians bombed a sugar factory, and all able-bodied men took sacks of sugar. At first we became ill from eating so much sugar, but it helped to improve the food.

I was quite good at finding food. When I was eight years old, I would sneak out of the ghetto and look in the garbage for potato peels. One day I came upon a man cutting up a dead horse, and he cut off a large piece of meat for me. We had a big feast.

Russians eat a lot of sunflower seeds. When they took walks on Sunday, they cracked a lot of them. I followed whoever was cracking seeds, and picked up what they dropped. When the bag was full I brought it home, and the family would crack seeds. In this way we had salt in our diet, as well as another source of food.

The Germans killed all pregnant women, and also mercilessly killed babies. My sister was born on March 10, 1943 in Mogilev. The women who lived with us made a huge shawl from old clothes. Every morning, my mother stood with her arms raised, and the women tied the shawl tightly, so that the Germans wouldn‘t notice that she was pregnant.

The Germans were not afraid to kill but they feared the dead. Dead people were collected onto a wagon, and that is how my mother was transported when the time came for her to give birth. They put her among the corpses, and because the Germans were afraid of the dead, they never checked. Once, when I was very sick, they transported me in the same way.

I have so many memories. One incident remains very vivid to me. A well-dressed man who spoke Romanian came to our place, and it was very nice to converse with him. He told my parents that if they would give him a letter to take to our family in Romania, asking them to send money, he would save me from the ghetto. He explained that he already had five girls to transfer, but wanted to take seven. When I think about it now, it is clear what his intentions were, but we were so tired, discouraged, and hungry that his offer sounded promising. He came back two months later, showed us a letter from our family, and instructed me to be ready by morning. When he arrived, my mother told him that if we live together, we die together. She was very strong-minded, and my father supported her decision. At the time I was very disappointed that I was going to miss a big adventure. The five girls were never heard from again. After the war, we learned that he had sold them to a German bordello.

After the Russians arrived, life did not get any better. They don’t love Jews!!! The worst part of their invasion was that they took all the men to work at what they called Robota Battalion. Some of the men were emaciated and sick. Many died immediately. They took my

father and my young uncle to Riga, Lithuania, to build airfields and highways. On the way to Riga, the train was attacked, and many were killed. For a long time, we didn't have any news of my father and uncle, and thought they were dead. Eight months later we heard that they were in Lithuania and in "good health," although they never had enough food.

One day, I was looking for food as usual, and saw a monster coming toward me. I started to run, and became entangled in a barbed wire fence. I cut my foot quite badly, and there was a lot of blood. The "monster" stopped near me (I now know it was a tank), and a man jumped out and came to see what had happened. He was kind, and talked to me in Russian, which I didn't understand. I was crying, as I was very scared. He lifted me up in his arms and put me in the tank and took me to the army infirmary, where they stitched and bandaged my foot, then took me back to the ghetto in a jeep. I came to the conclusion that in spite of all the evil around me, some people were good. Most of them, though, were wild and rough. They would stop people in the street and take everything they possessed. "Davai Chas," they said—"Give me your watch" —and you gave it if you valued your life. They also raped women.

One day, after the Germans were defeated, my mother told us that we had to return to Romania. My father and uncle were somewhere in Russia. My mother, my little sister—who was a year old—and I, who was eleven, packed everything we could carry, and one morning we started walking home.

I don't remember much of the journey, except that it was very, very cold and we were very, very hungry. I would sneak into a pigsty and steal sugar cane. I had to be very quick, or the pigs would start a ruckus and attract the farmer. Sugar cane grew everywhere in the

Ukraine. We ate it every day. I would put a piece of cane in my sister's mouth. When she sucked on it, she didn't cry.

We walked most of every day, and slept huddled together for warmth, out in the open or in a barn if we were lucky enough to find one. We were very tired and had nothing to eat. One day, my mother came to a decision. She told me she would leave me and the baby, beg a ride from a farmer, and go to find food. I will never forget that day. I sat on the ground, holding my sister and thinking that we would never see our mother again. I cried my eyes out. I had never felt so lost, cold, and hungry. An entire day went by. All of a sudden, I saw a figure walking toward us from far away, and I saw my mother, tired and bent like an old woman. We hugged and cried. She told us that she wasn't able to find food, and if we had to die, we should die together. We huddled together, hungry and cold, and tried to sleep.

Suddenly we heard a loud noise. We looked up, surprised to see that a train had stopped nearby, almost on top of us. Some of the cars were open, like the ones used to transport tractors and tanks. My mother said that we had to climb onto one of the open cars. I argued that the train might go back to the Ukraine, but she insisted that we had to take the risk because we needed to find food. We climbed onto the open car and slept. In the morning, the train still wasn't moving so, curious, I looked up and my heart almost stopped beating!

Right in front of me stood a Russian soldier, an invalid with a wooden leg. He started to shout at us to get off the train. We tried telling him that we were refugees. He said he would shoot us. Luckily, we had a half a bottle of vodka. I held it out to him, but suddenly the train gave a lurch and started to move. I lost my balance and the bottle of vodka fell to the ground

and shattered. But we were on our way, and we traveled for a long time. The next stop was Galatz, Romania. It was unbelievable. We had arrived home!

We thought we would be safe in Galatz, but we were not. My parents had left our entire household in my father's brother's loft. When we arrived at the house, my mother asked about our belongings. My aunt and her sisters attacked and beat my mother, verbally abused her, and threw her out. She accused my mother of having a child by a German. (My little sister was blond, with beautiful green eyes). We had no clothing and no home. Strangers helped us with food, clothing, and shelter. Someone, I don't recall who, helped us move to Bucharest, where we also had family.

When we arrived in Bucharest, we didn't have money to pay rent. My mother found a small garbage room which she thoroughly cleaned. We found an old bed which barely fit in the room, but this was our home, and the three of us slept together to keep warm. We lived there until my father came home. When my father returned, we finally moved into a normal home.

I started school, but I was too old to be in the first grade, so I was expelled. My parents hired a private tutor, who taught me, arithmetic, geography, literature, and English, for which I am eternally grateful. I learned Russian, German, Yiddish, and Hebrew. I also understand a little French.

In 1950 we sailed to Israel. We arrived here on the 1st of October, 1950.

Here I died on the 1st of December 2016.