SEQ CHAPTER \h \r 1*Tape three, side one:*

JF: You said you were a fighter.

LI: No, when I, when I could.

JF: When you could?

LI: There was many times I couldn't, and I cried very much.

JF: When did you feel that you were a fighter? In what circumstances do you feel that you could express that?

LI: When there was an injustice toward me, or toward someone, I was a fighter, and even toward my class.

JF: In what way? Can you give me an example?

LI: How? To let them know that they did that and that it is not right. It doesn't matter what happened to me after.

JF: You would say this?

LI: I would say that to them and I said, when I was a little one, to that teacher of mine that what she did to me with that lousy thing was not right because I didn't do anything bad. My father then...

JF: You spoke up then for your rights?

LI: Yes, I spoke up.

JF: You felt that somehow you would get out at this time when your family was taken from their home? You felt somehow you would get out of Romania.

LI: Yes. I thought that I don't want to stay there too much.

JF: What about your parents? Did you feel that your parents wanted to stay?

LI: My father was becoming old and he thought that what was his situation, he couldn't do anything outside, that he has not technical knowledge to do something technical on his own.

JF: You mean, to leave Romania?

LI: To leave Romania and what to do in another part. First was, he would--there are so many things that come in my mind that I think that I am, that I changed the time. Let me finish that because it was a family who owned a house in another area of Bucharest came to us to take the apartment upstairs, to stay there without money and to rent their own house, telling me-- I didn't know at that particular time--but telling me, "Oh, you are the owner, then I shall take the apartment upstairs, because I don't want, I am so good, I don't want to take your own apartment, the apartment of an owner."

JF: This was a non-Jewish family that was coming in?

LI: All. All. In one day came a lady, an obese one, who came from another little town in Romania and she told me, "I want to come in Bucharest. Then, I want to come here to be with my sister because my husband is an officer and he is fighting in Russia." You know that Romanians fought with Germany in Russia. "Oh yes, I like your house, and that, and that, I want to enter in that house." My mother heard that and came. "You know, I want to enter in that house tomorrow, at ten o'clock." My mother said, "We have no place where to go. We have nothing." That was December, 1940, and I was there, but I had rubeola.7 I had a little bit of fever, not too much, and I had in that time that I was somehow ill, and my mother said to her, "Where to go? You know that we have no place where to go? Why to come from today to tomorrow?" "If you shall not be out from here tomorrow at ten, you see that vase?" And she took a crystal vase. "I shall put all these things in 80 pieces," or something like that. It was absolutely clear. The result was that we lost all our furniture and...

JF: She took all of your belongings?

LI: No, she took some little things. So, in her way, as the lady of the house, she became all of a sudden, in that first minute the lady of the house.

JF: And what did she do with your furniture?

LI: We took some furniture and we put it in a sort of a garage. Never saw it again. Never, ever. Some we could take with us. My parents went to my uncle's house, and my uncle was with his parents-in-law, and they had a little room for my parents, and my mother was there cooking and doing all of these kind of things for them and I was, how to say, in another place with another aunt, but she has also a little apartment, rented, and no one took that rented apartment because it was an apartment where the owner was a Romanian one. It was Jewish people but the owner, who was Romanian, was allowed to remain. If the owner was Jewish people and the Jewish renter was Jewish, they had to go and Romanian can come in. Then, I said, how you say, that was December, '41, that was not '40.

JF: December '41.

LI: And, that was two days before the New Year. That was probably why she was in such a hurry to be there, I don't know. I slept in the entrance hall of my aunt. When you opened the door, there was my bed, and that was--it was very hard for me.

JF: Were you in school at this time, or had you finished?

LI: I finished the high school and I was in the first year of medical school in a Jewish medical school.

JF: You had entered a Jewish medical school?

LI: Yes.

JF: Were the Jewish medical schools accredited by the state?

LI: No. Not in that time, after, after.

JF: After the war, it was recognized. In retrospect, anybody who had been there at that time was certified?

LI: Yes, because our teachers were all, belonged, I told you, one time to the Medical, regular Medical School of Bucharest.

JF: Can you tell me a little bit about medical school? Can you tell me what it was like at that time?

LI: Was like at that time:We could do also dissection.

JF: You could do dissection? Where did you get the cadavers?

LI: They did. Despite the rabbis and all the other things.

JF: They were Jewish cadavers?

LI: They were Jewish cadavers from Jewish hospitals and we did not too much, I think, but when we enter after in the normal Romanian medical school, we saw that our colleagues who did the training in this time, did less than us.

JF: You had the cream of the crop, as far as your professors were concerned?

LI: Yes, as a teacher we had.

JF: And your education was not interrupted by what was going on in Europe?

LI: Was not interrupted. I had from my uncle his books, and if I wouldn't have, it was so we did a sort of good organization to learn, to have the possibility to learn.

JF: The hospital, there was a hospital within the Jewish section that was still functioning?

LI: Yes.

JF: One hospital, or more? You said that there were two medical schools.

LI: It was two.

JF: Two hospitals.

LI: It doesn't matter whose was because they were sent to work there without, we worked in the hospital without money. We worked in order to learn.

JF: You had to pay tuition for the medical school.

LI: Yes. Some. It was very variable, and the director was speaking with us, and I had to give very few.

JF: Very little money?

LI: Very little money, and others had nothing to give, even nothing because that was in the community.

JF: How many students were in medical school at that time? Approximately?

LI: I don't know.

JF: In your class?

LI: Could be 15 or 20.

JF: Fifteen or 20 in your class?

LI: Yes, and at the same time we had to do, you know that was enforced labor my father did, because you asked me what did my father. My father did what he could. If he had had some friends, Romanian friends and some others who was [unclear] Cohen and Ionesco and Cohen said to Ionescu, "Call this one because they can give some work for you, very good to clear your situation, not to be so bad," and then he could do some work in that way.

JF: So, he did some work for this Ionescu who was a Romanian who was helpful to him?

LI: Yes, and from some of them.

JF: That is how he got whatever monies he got.

LI: But he was taken for special labor, for imposed labor, what is that?

JF: Forced labor.

LI: Forced labor.

JF: What about you? Were you expected...?

LI: I was also, but I shall tell you what did my father. My father was put in that year, I don't remember the year, it was in that year we were out from our house, they put to pull a chariot; instead of horse they put men on that chariot, and he was put with others. They were four to pull a chariot, in summer, were rocks; in winter was snow, and he told me the snow was very weighty.

JF: Is what?

LI: Very heavy.

JF: Very heavy. So he was pulling a cart, as if he were a horse or an animal?

LI: Yes. I was sent to some sort of building, they did some sort of statistics with us. They gave us--took I, in one time I took the beans out from the other vegetables. I couldn't understand and I didn't want to understand anything, what I was doing. They give us something to take out a number or something, a very--the same thing for all these that were many, many papers, for some outside work from the crops, the result of the crops, and to take out some and to let the other and to do the difference, how was the crops in that year and what was the result for beans in another year, and what was the result for cabbage in another year.

JF: How many hours a week were you supposed to be doing this?

LI: All the afternoon.

JF: All the afternoon or all the day?

LI: No, all the afternoon.

JF: And, then, when did you go to class?

LI: In the morning.

JF: In the morning you were able to go to class?

LI: Some hours in the morning.

JF: Was there--the Jewish medical schools were not secret? The Romanian government knew that they existed?

LI: Yes. Sure.

JF: There was no objection to them existing?

LI: No.

JF: They did not interfere in any way with the functioning of the medical schools?

LI: No. They were not shut any time. But the government was Antonescu. This was a general who was somehow against the Iron Guard and who told Hitler, when Hitler had to make a decision who to remain in the power in Romania because...

JF: Antoneseu was the cooperative?

LI: Antonescu said to him, "I have the army," and that was the real thing that made Hitler to make the decision, because he saw that after the captain was killed, Horia Sima8 fled, but he came back, and when he came back, Hitler saw that they are disorganized and they have not the masses, the population with them.

JF: And Antonescu had the people?

LI: Yes.

JF: And the army?

LI: Antonescu was also very antisemitic, but he--here is something, I think, from Romanian history to learn, that Romania being a little country, that country was dependent on another powerful country all the time. When they were under Turkey, when they were under so and so, they always had some alliances with a powerful one.

JF: They couldn't do it by themselves?

LI: Yes, and all war, they were staying somehow and they wanted to see who would be victorious to be with them. In the beginning they were with the Germans. You know that very well, and they were always with Germans because the King was from a German family. The first one, but Carol, who was the king in my childhood, during my childhood, was allied with French and English, but the French and English did Munich and the others, and the result was such that he couldn't stay any longer and he had to resign and to leave Romania, and his son came to the throne, but he was a child and Antonescu had the power.

JF: How do you understand, if you describe Antonescu as an antisemitic, how do you understand the fact that he permitted such a rich educational life to go on within the Jewish community?

LI: He didn't think that that was rich. He didn't think that that will be recognized, and he used so many people and he was involved in many things else, and that was not important for them. We have that was out, the artists were out. We had beautiful artists, actresses.

JF: They were kicked out?

LI: We have had also a theatre. Once.

JF: A very rich theatre.

LI: They did such beautiful presentations with some political understanding that even the Romanian actors and actresses came, that we have not always Germans, the Romanians. There were some who understood their real situation, but they couldn't do anything. It--one could not do. No one that [unclear]. No one can understand that no Jew could do anything. When we knew that many went out and was mined and they were killed. And there was no place to [unclear] that *Struma*, I told you. I told you that one of my friends was a very, not only my cousin I told you about my cousin who was a lawyer and an engineer...

JF: But we are talking now about the boat, the *Struma*?

LI: Yes, and that was a very old boat and some of the people thought about that boat. It was a Greek [unclear]. How to say? As Onassis was, how to say? It was a Greek one, who owned, the owner, and it was very old and some people thought that this ship is a real coffin.

JF: A coffin.

LI: One of my neighbors, a young neighbor, a friend of mine, had a ticket for--it was a sort of madness. It was not the first ship to go out, and one of my friends had a ticket for the first--when was the first organized to go out, the first time for that ship to go to Palestine, and it was postponed because the ship was in such a situation, was impossible to...

JF: It was in very bad condition.

LI: Very bad condition, and after that were also two other postponements and the third one or the fourth one, I don't remember, my cousin said to us that he has to go immediately. I don't know why he worried about. I don't know why. He took his mother, his mother was my grandfather's sister, and he was the first cousin of my mother. He was a lawyer and an engineer and his name was Merlow [phonetic]. He was a wise, very respected one, and despite he was a younger one, he was not married and because of him, my other uncle gave him his son, my cousin, who was at that time 18, I think, 18 years old, he gave him to him in order to go to Palestine and to be the first of our family to be put in that country, and in that time on that ship went my friend, my neighbor, [name unclear]. He told me before, "I am reluctant to go with that ship because it was so many times postponed, and I wanted so much the first time, but with all these postponements, I don't think it is a good one. I don't want to go, but..." Another one, I told you we were in some street, very close to each other, and the other one named Louis Helibrant. This one was a very gifted one, he was very gifted in painting and architecture, and he wanted to take me with him, and I told him, "I shall not go without my parents, and it's not--if you want to go there and we shall write each other and we shall see what will be." That is my only guilt that I couldn't retain him to stay. He wanted so much. He wanted to go because being older, he lost years. He was put out from architecture. It took a while to do the architecture high school. I told you. I have to do two years of high school. The high school was there easier to be done because the elementary school was--and it was in the same classes or something, the same building, but the medical school or the university has to be built, and that took years, and many of my friends who were older than me, they lost years doing nothing or doing something or changing or--I cannot tell you so many things they did and forced labor, as my husband has done forced labor in a railway, for railway to...

JF: Digging for the tracks?

LI: Digging for the tracks, or whatsoever, digging, and that is the same thing that did my father in some way. Instead of digging he pulled the chariot.

JF: Did...?

LI: And after that, some of them also came to do the same thing as I did when I was in the university. I told you that we had to do a special work in statistics. I told you about this.

JF: Yes.

LI: But to come back to the *Struma*. That Louis wanted so much to go away, to be able to do his life. He couldn't see anything anymore. He has only his mother, and was in my neighborhood. And he, with his enthusiasm, he pushed his good friend, a marvelous young man, and this [unclear] who didn't want anymore to go, he came back and he said, "He will go." And other, on the same street, someone who was across from my home, and they were six which I know. They went with that ship, and on that ship was also the father of my colleague. He was older, and he was also sent by his family to be the first one to see what is to be done and how to prepare ourselves to go there, etc. And they were on the ship that was like a coffin, as I said. It was a very old one and it was fixed many times and probably not good.

JF: And the people who were going on the ship knew that before they went?

LI: No. These people, I told you, there was only one who had a ticket for the first voyage, and he thought something is wrong with that, because was postponed so many times. But the others thought, "Oh, I have the possibility, that possibility comes to me and I have to take it immediately."

JF: They were not worried about the ship itself?

LI: Yes. They didn't want to think about that. They were so happy to have it that they didn't want to know anything wrong about the ship and that was--I shall do a design for you. I don't know if you have in your mind that geographical--that is Romania, yes. That is Romania. Here is the Black Sea.

JF: Yes.

LI: And here is the Turkey.

JF: Right.

LI: And here is the Greece, yes?

JF: Yes.

LI: One have to go through Bospor. Before Bospor, before Bosphorus, they were stopped here. Here is the Black Sea.

JF: Yes.

LI: South of the Black Sea, the south coast, which was Turkish, and here is Istanbul.

JF: Yes.

LI: They remained here and remained here and couldn't go farther. I know that they ran out of water and no one allowed any other ship to give them water. That was one version. The other was that they were killed by a German ship.9 They were...

JF: Torpedoed?

LI: No. German ships bombed them. But, in the time that they stayed there, one woman was pregnant and near to deliver. She was allowed to go in the Istanbul hospital and she delivered there the child.

JF: And what happened to her, do you know?

LI: I think she went in Palestine, I think.

JF: How did you hear about her?

LI: You know, I heard about the father of my friend one day when I went there. I think it was also in a newspaper, in some Jewish newspaper or something.

JF: The reports had been that there was only one survivor, a man?

LI: No.

JF: But you are saying there were two.

LI: Yes, I heard from many of our--knowledge of our ideas.

JF: From different sources?

LI: Yes, as example, my friend, [unclear] I tell you that I have a good friend for ten years, she was a colleague of mine in *Lyceum* and in the medical school also, and her father has a big house. They were wealthy, and they had a good radio set and they heard the BBC, London, London was our source, and from time to time we heard, we were there or he heard and he told me or he told his daughter, it was all sort of...

JF: He heard this story on the BBC, about the *Struma*.

LI: We know the *Struma*.

JF: No, about the survivor. I am talking about the woman that survived it.

LI: It could be that that was the BBC, I am not so sure.

JF: Okay.

LI: I am not so sure but I can ask someone. What I want to know...

*Tape three, side two:*

JF: The area of Bucharest that you were now living in, after you were ousted from your home, was this an official ghetto, now? Was this sealed off in anyway from the rest of Bucharest?

LI: No. Never.

JF: This was never sealed off?

LI: Never sealed off.

JF: You were able to go and come with freedom?

LI: Yes. Yes.

JF: Were you required in anyway to identify yourselves as Jews?

LI: No. In Bucharest, never. We have never had the yellow...

JF: Star.

LI: No star.

JF: There was a Dr Filderman10 who was quite...

LI: Oh, yes.

JF: Who was quite helpful.

LI: Dr. Filderman has had the possibility to speak with this general, the head of the state, and to promise him...

JF: Antonescu.

LI: Antonesou, and to promise him money and whatsoever. The problems, you know, they were sent, they took the north of Transylvania when the Russians took Bessarabia and Bukovina. The Hungarians took again the north part of Transylvania, and they sent in Auschwitz the Jews of the north part, but the Jews from Moldavia. There was also was a pogrom in Bucharest and was in Jassy. In Jassy a big part of my family was killed because they were very many were put in some special, you heard about cattle trains?

JF: Cattle trains.

LI: Yes, many of them, and they were killed in that train because they were not able to...

JF: They suffocated.

LI: They were suffocated, and some of them went in a special camp in Transnistria.

JF: The special camp...

LI: In Transnistria. I shall remind that--in Mogilev, in Mogilev.

JF: In Mogilev.

LI: My cousin came out from Mogilev and he was so...

JF: He was so thin?

LI: And he was with a sort of bag. You know bags for potatoes.

JF: A potato sack?

LI: Sack.

JF: That is what he was wearing?

LI: We sent--the community, the Jewish community told us, if you have some dresses, clothing, something, and we sent for them many things. Very few came there, was stolen.

JF: You mean this was during the war?

LI: Yes, was during the war.

JF: Tell me more about the functioning of the Jewish community in Bucharest. You were not held to a ghetto. Dr. Filderman was able to speak with Antonescu.

LI: Yes.

JF: Tell me about the Jewish Council and the functionings of the government in the ghetto. What were they able to do for you and what couldn't they do for you?

LI: I think that they could sustain all of these schools. They did something not to have a problem, or to have other killing. They...

JF: How did they do that?

LI: I think they promised money.

JF: The Jewish Council promised the government money?

LI: I think so. I don't know.

JF: Where would the money come from.

LI: There were some people, who were--I ask myself, there were wealthy Jewish people before, and probably they lived somewhere in provinces, not in Bucharest, and not in the biggest towns of Romania, who were under the power of Legionaires [Iron Guards] or something like that. I think they have hidden and they have some money, or they have from outside.

JF: Were these people brought into Bucharest or did they come to Bucharest from the more rural areas around?

LI: Yes, many came from...

JF: Were they forced to, or did they come by choice?

LI: No, they came for protection.

JF: And some of these families...

LI: Can I tell you something very, very--it's not a joke.

JF: Yes.

LI: It is not a joke, it is reality. I told you that my family was in that town where the captain of the Iron Guard was.

JF: Yes.

LI: When they were in power, they called my grandfather and my uncles. My grandfather was not so wealthy, but my uncles had some shops, and they beat them, I told you, they beat them, because they wanted money to make a fountain, how to say? A fountain...

JF: A fountain, a city fountain.

LI: A city fountain, but the city had not normal water. They have old fountains to take water from.

JF: A well?

LI: A well, yeh. And how to do a fountain if the water...?

JF: There was not enough water supply or pressure for a fountain?

LI: No, they wanted that as a monument for him, and how to do such a monument, exactly such a monument, in a town that has not water pumping? It was a crazy thing, absolutely crazy, and they were beaten, and I had told them, they were diabetics, and they had such a problem. After that, they came in Bucharest, some of them who could, two of them.

JF: People were free to come to Bucharest, then, to move into this restricted area?

LI: You know, Romania, one could deal with some people with money or with goods, and they realized, they had furniture, their homes, that is not so much for them. When they saw that, they saw that they have to run away from that place.

JF: The streets in Bucharest where the Jews lived, these were restricted, these were a restricted number of streets where they were supposed to live?

LI: No, not the restriction as you know in a Warsaw Ghetto. I was in Warsaw after the war and I saw, and I was at Auschwitz also. Better not to go there. But, that doesn't matter. I have had some relatives who were there, they were sent to Auschwitz, northern Bukovina, they were in Bukovina, they were in the north of Transylvania, I told you that, and the others to the other part...

JF: Did you know, when you were in Bucharest, during the war, exactly what was happening?

LI: Not exactly, not exactly.

JF: How much did you know?

LI: That is, I know that they did something wrong to Jewish people, more, but not only to Jewish people, also to some who were not in their political, in their mind. We knew that does exist in some camps, but not what was done in that camps. What we knew was that many people were killed on their spot in Romania. Most people were not sent in camps, was killed in their towns, in their places, where they were.

JF: When you talk about the Romanians who were killed in their spots, in their towns, was this killing done by Germans or by Romanians?

LI: By the Romanians, most. By the Legionaires.

JF: You are talking about the Iron Guard?

LI: Iron Guard.

JF: Was this under orders from the Germans, or was this self-motivated?

LI: I don't know. What I am thinking is they gave some sort of free-hand, and they beat by their own, because they did not only to Jewish people, as I told you, they killed very many, very high and interesting personalities. Political, Romanian personalities were killed in that time. In fact I told you about Jorga who was one of their renowned historians, about Duca [phonetic] who was a very good minister of them, about Calinescu and all these people and...

JF: They went after the intelligentsia, the artists, the writers also?

LI: Yes. Of them.

JF: Of the Romanians? Did they go after, as they did in Poland, for instance, where they wiped out the intelligentsia?

LI: The Jewish intelligentsia was put out from their work place.

JF: What about the non-Jewish? Was that also under attack by the Iron Guard?

LI: No. They were not.

JF: They were left alone. Okay. There were no deportations? There were no round-ups from Bucharest?

LI: There were some who disappeared, but we don't know.

JF: Individuals?

LI: Individuals disappeared. That was the meaning that this, the sister of Cornell, [phonetic] I told you came to me, but there were others who were more--she didn't know the exact situation. That was her meaning when she came to me, because I didn't know exactly what Cornell did. I know some. He just probably, probably I thought after, that probably he wanted to make me understand and go farther and farther to help him in his way.

JF: After his death, did you know much of what was going on in the underground movement?

LI: Yes, yes, after the liberation. [unclear]

JF: He died in '44?

LI: Yes.

JF: So it wasn't until after his death that you were aware of...?

LI: I didn't know him, I didn't know him much a long time before.

JF: It wasn't until you knew...?

LI: He was in prison for a while. He was in prison for a long while. He died in the spring of '44, I think. I am not so sure. I am not so sure. You could ask my husband because he knew.

JF: Your knowledge of the underground movements, then, the anti-fascist movements, were not until you knew him?

LI: No. No. I, I know that that exists when I lost--that there exists some underground, Zionist movement, but I couldn't locate it then.

JF: The Zionists?

LI: Right, the Zionists. I know that is--I heard that is a communist underground. I knew that does existed from him because he told me like that. Oh, I know from other one also, who was a Christian one, who was also a friend of another friend, who he came to me and told me, you know, for this anti-fascist, yes I know from more than his time about that, and I gave him also some money. I--it was also Jewish people who wanted money, or, Keren Kayemet, you know that? And we gave for Keren Kayemet was not only money, but was also goods, clothes.

JF: Was this done through the Jewish Council, or this was...?

LI: Jewish.

JF: This was done through the Jewish Council? And you gave clothes, you gave money, for other parts of Romania where the Jews were suffering?

LI: Yes, and for a while, for a time, we knew that was Mogilev, and after that we heard that was stolen by some...

JF: It was supposed to go Mogilev, to the camp in Mogilev?

LI: Yes.

JF: But you don't think that it got there?

LI: I don't know, I think they got some. When my cousin came with these beautiful dressing, he told us that they have had no much, and we thought that they have something, even not for eating, but for clothing. I don't know exactly what it was.

JF: What other kinds of functions did the Jewish Council perform during this time? They were supporting the educational system, the two medical schools. The names of the medical schools, by the way were...?

LI: Yes, one was Onescu. Onescu is a Romanian name but that was his name, it was a man who was a good organizer.

JF: And how was that spelled.

LI: O-N-E-S-C-U and Ernest Abason. Ernest is Ernest, and Abason is A-B-A-S-O-N.

JF: And which of the schools were you in?

LI: I was in the Onescu.

JF: You were in the Onescu school. So they were supporting these medical schools, they were supporting the hospital, they were supporting the high schools.

LI: The other schools. All the schools at that time because no one had--we have the theatre, and that theatre was, by the way, named Barashum [originally a theater in Bucharest]. If any one told you about Barashum, that was before that time. It was a Jewish club, a sort of club, a sort of unity between Jewish people, between Jewish men who worked together to be able to help poor people.

JF: What was this called?

LI: Barashum. And my father was a member of this.

JF: And they would get together for the idea of helping people?

LI: That was before the war.

JF: Yes, this was under the Jewish Council?

LI: Yes.

JF: And this existed afterwards.

LI: I think we have a big picture of them with the president in the middle, with all those people around.

JF: Were they also involved in any kind of religious, either education or for any kind of religious practice, during the war?

LI: I think that they sustained the synagogue, because in the time that I didn't tell you, but in the time of Iron Guard and even after, some synagogues were disaffected, or destroyed. I don't know if they were completely destroyed, but they were disaffected by the Iron Guard.

JF: How many synagogues were left during the war, that you know of?

LI: Two. Three very important. They were one for Sephardim, one for Ashkenazim, and they may be separated and there were some little who remained...

JF: Small Orthodox groups?

LI: Yes, not specifically Orthodox, but they go together, doesn't matter if there is a synagogue or not a synagogue because that was in the area where there were very many Jews.

JF: Were these like *havurim*, these groups?

LI: Yes, they handle to go into a good situation with police, you know, with the policemen who was in that area.

JF: Who permitted them to meet?

LI: Ya, he [laughing].

JF: He looked the other way?

LI: Exactly.

JF: So, this would be a very small group, like a *minyan* of people.

LI: But, there were many *minyan*. Many.

JF: Many, many.

LI: Because I know that, because that was--I told you that I have an uncle, not this one, another one, the brother of my grandfather, who was a doctor and who let his son to go with *Struma*. He had the house he left in that area where this little tiny synagogues were. They remained. My father was also to one of them in one time.

JF: So, there was no interference in the functioning of the synagogues by the police or by the government?

LI: From time to time, they want to see how we did something, stop it, close it or something, but...

JF: Generally they were permitted to function?

LI: And I feel, as I said to you, at one time the General knew that Hitler will...

JF: You're talking about Antonescu now?

LI: Antonescu, yes. Will not...

JF: He would not win?

LI: He would not win the war.

JF: This was why he...

LI: You know, he sent very slowly, very, very slowly, and that was our luck, because if that was a matter of time and power.

JF: So, he was protecting himself by protecting the Jewish...

LI: He didn't protect the Jews. He protected himself and the state, and Romania. That was. No, he never helped the Jews. No.

JF: But, he was protecting himself, given that Germany could fail.

LI: Because of the radio station and all our news we had in some time, it was such a believing that America will come, and France or English will come, and it was correct one time they entered in Italy, and by the way, we have two times Americans came by airplane, and they killed, was killed a big amount of Jewish people.

JF: How?

LI: How? They come to--their goal was to make a bombardment of that area where is the Romanian, the Romanian oil, [Ploesti oil fields] if you have some idea...

JF: This is what the Germans were counting on, the Romanian oil, so they were out to bomb the oil fields?

LI: Sure, they were right. But they missed the point in some. It was what I remember very well, it was once when they went to Ploesti, that is, the area near the mountains, after Bucharest, the south of Bucharest, that is Ploesti, and that is, so to say, the area with oil. They wanted for sure to make a bombardment on that area and to cut the oil there. But I don't know...

JF: They missed their target?

LI: They missed their target in some amount. It was very bad.

JF: And where were the Jews that were killed?

LI: That was once. The second time I don't know what they wanted. They came in August, in April the 4th, '44. It was '44. April 4th was a big bombardment on Bucharest because they were some Germans who, some German army...

JF: There was some German army in Bucharest?

LI: Yes, they wanted to destroy them, to change the way of the war, probably, and they did a bombardment on an area where the medical school is, and there is sort of a big house of the king, kings. I spoke with many mistakes, I think. And in that area were very, very many Jews, and you know, the only possibility to help yourself in that time, they have some hole, what to say, in the earth, linear...

JF: Holes.

LI: Holes, as in the war, you know, they were...

JF: Like trenches.

LI: Like trenches in zig zag, and when a bomb came, you were exactly in the earth. And were killed very many people there.

JF: There were trenches...

LI: Sort of trenches.

JF: ...that were in the city of Bucharest, and when the bombers came...

LI: Yes, they came overhead.

JF: The people in the trenches were killed. Did they hit the medical school?

LI: No.

JF: They didn't hit their goal?

LI: No. No. I don't think that the medical school was a goal. The only thing was a monument of a renowned doctor was down. That was all. No, they hit in some amount. We were not there because we were in our school. They hit in some amount, but not too much.

JF: Did you have much contact with the German troops that were stationed in Bucharest?

LI: The only time I saw them, no. But the only time I saw them, was, that was a bombardment when I was in the street with my mother, and we saw three German soldiers who were hiding themselves in a little plant, a textile plant, near our house. We didn't know that they were there, and after, when we came out from our basement we were in, and go to our house, we saw them, these three with [unclear].

JF: Handcuffs?

LI: Handcuffs. They were taken by the workers.

JF: What else happened during that time, before we get to the end of the war? Is there anything else that you can fill us in on, that you would like to talk about?

LI: Yes, many. Very many, I have not put together all of my ideas. Once I was to a concerto, in a little recital, it was a recital house.

JF: When you talk about something like that, was this Jewish?

LI: No, no.

JF: This was a regular, public...?

LI: This was before we were sent out from our home and not allowed in a public...

JF: Before there were restrictions?

LI: Oh. yes, and Mr. Kempff11--you heard about Kempff, the pianist, came to give a recital. It was not he, the only one that came. Came also others, German people, but he was the only one who gave a recital in Daris [phonetic], that is the name of the building with the little recital room, and the tickets were sold normally, and I was with a friend of mine. At the beginning when he came, he said that he didn't want for any Jew to be there, to be at his concert. He took me out because I wanted to cry. Why, then, they sold the tickets? And that turned me out from all this kind. My hope was, my only good feeling was that the other one--I shall remember his name, he was a renowned one--who gave concerts but he never tell this kind of things and we were able to hear. I shall remember his name because I want to--you know these differences are very important and I think that Kempff was not taught to say something. That was for his own will to say that.

JF: Oh, he was not told to say that? This was his own feelings.

LI: Yes, his feelings, because I told another person and they said, "Oh, he is such a good pianist." He's even now, I don't know exactly now, he's now very old. I don't know if he's alive but--Gieseking,12 you heard about Gieseking?

JF: Gieseking did not say such a thing?

LI: I don't know what was his source either, but he never did that and, how to say, was the distortion of life what they did to us. They took for us our ideals. I wanted to do something in art. That war took lives as killing people, directly their bombing, or killing their psyche, or killing their dreams, or killing something in themselves or distorting their lives.

JF: You said that you knew somewhat what was happening. You knew that the concentration camps existed during the war...

LI: I knew that it was a camp in Mogilev.

JF: Mogilev.

LI: I knew about that.

JF: But, you didn't know about the death camps in the rest of Europe?

LI: No.

JF: During the war?

LI: I know that many bad things, beatings and worse things was done to Jewish people in Germany.

JF: You did not know that the Jews had been singled out for elimination?

LI: No.

JF: Until after the war?

LI: That idea was not, doesn't came, that wasn't, that they doesn't want, but was not clear that they did this kind of criminal things and to put them into mass killings. The idea of mass killings was not to us, was not clear.

*Tape four, side one:*

JF: The idea of mass killing was not something, the idea of extermination centers, death camps, was not something that you had any idea about?

LI: That I know, no. I know that they did something very wrong, and something very wrong possible to be killed, as such, in cattle, in trains or in cattle trains...

JF: Did you fear that your family would be deported in some way?

LI: Yes, in such a way, killed in trains, killed being sent there.

JF: Like Mogilev?

LI: Like Mogilev or like this kind, or by soldiers who killed people here and there, here and there.

JF: Random killings?

LI: Yes.

JF: These kinds of random killings, these were going on in Bucharest, on the streets? Would people be killed at random, or were these the people who disappeared that you talked about before?

LI: They disappeared. They were killed when this type of pogrom were, and this kind of situation were, in the little town of the country, when was this change with Bessarabia and the other. We knew some of them were killed because some of our, not family, friends, were killed, some Jewish soldier were killed when was this change from getting Bessarabia to Russia and Transylvania to Hungary. These changing situation was immediately they took the advantage to do some killings and to revenge, or something like that, or to kill someone to remain with all his goods. It will be very good for friend to disappear. If you cannot make him disappear in another way, you can make him disappear in that way for sure.

JF: What else did you want to mention about the war period? You said that there were several things that you wanted to talk about.

LI: [Long pause] You know, it was a joke, one time. It was many jokes that was our, what we eat in that time, and it was such a situation, that was a joke: Someone is praying to God, "Dear God, for 5000 years we have been your chosen people, and that is enough. Choose another one now." That was the feeling that we wanted to be helped, and no one could help us and we were in such a situation, it was a sort of enraging situation, what to do? We couldn't do anything.

JF: You said that jokes were what you ate. It was an important factor in keeping your spirits.

LI: Jokes, yes.

JF: Can you tell me more about that?

LI: Oh, I don't know what it was, but there were...

JF: A lot of humor was used to keep people's spirits?

LI: Yes, you told me that you knew in Barashum. I told you in that building of Barashum all these people who were actors and actresses, Jewish actors and actresses, and entertainment and so, they did a very good entertainment.

JF: And they were permitted to do this throughout the war?

LI: It was in the time of the war.

JF: In the war?

LI: And they thought that they doesn't understood, it was some sort of, you know...

JF: Like a double meaning?

LI: Hidden, double-meaning, hidden meaning.

JF: This was Yiddish theatre, or Romanian?

LI: Was in Romanian and in Yiddish, was also in Romanian. There are songs, there are songs in Yiddish, songs in Romanian, and so. And I told you that they were also in Romanian because many of Christian Romanians came to see that.

JF: And they would not get in trouble for coming to the Jewish theatre?

LI: I don't think so because they were the most renowned. You know, some of the most renowned figures, they couldn't do anything very worse to them because of the public situation was sufficiently worse. At that time the war was somehow clear, that the war was not gained. It was lost, but no one knew and was another word that ran between us. If you can remain alive, you shall have a beautiful life after. No one knew what sort of beautiful life. We knew after what sort of beautiful life, but in that time all we wanted to remain alive. That was all. Wanted to remain alive and to help each other, because we were only in that way to help only between us. No one from outside could help us. All wanted from us to take advantage of something, to take our houses, to take our goods, to take all they wanted from us. And that was our meaning [unclear]. There were some who could do some, let us say, translation. Not to sign their name, or to remind their--some change their name you know when you are signing something, to sign another name. Now, to remind your real name and to put your real name, and that was in some--I don't remember for how long was that they couldn't write in Romanian. That was something that was absolutely more than a joke.

JF: Wait, the Jews were not allowed to write in Romanian? Was that throughout the war?

LI: It was not all the time.

JF: Not the whole time.

LI: Because [unclear].

JF: You started to complete the story about your medical training. You started medical school in what year? In '41?

LI: In '42. In fall '42.

JF: In '42. So that you were not done with medical school at the end of the war?

LI: No, I entered in the medical school in the third year.

JF: You were in the third year?

LI: In the medical school.

JF: And the war was over?

LI: The war was over.

JF: And what happened at that point, after the war? Well, let's talk about the medical school.

LI: After the war?

JF: Yes. What happened?

LI: They were some, they couldn't, they were not allowed any more for a while to say, "You, kike, you dirty kike," or something like that.

JF: They were not allowed to say that?

LI: But they said it.

JF: You mean the government said that they were not allowed?

LI: That was, you know the situation was that not to do things like that. But the king was in power in that time and he was a sort of, he wanted to be a democratical, liberal figure and understandful and all of that, but after that begin to be a very hard to deal with teachers. The colleagues I shall tell you something. My name was with "I." With "I" begin the name of Ionescu, like is here Schmidt or something like that. When they, in the first day, they read, one of the teachers come or an assistant or whatever, he was come to ask the catalog, to ask the name and to see if the person is there, they read three names of Goldstein. Goldstein was a Jewish name. Three Goldsteins. "So many Goldsteins here! What shall we do with them?" And after that came the Ionescus and they were only four Ionescu, Stephen. They were three: Ionescu, Alexander. A. Ionescu, S. Ionescu, V--and then came 15 or 20 Ionescus. That was not too much but only three Goldsteins.

JF: That was too much? The Jewish medical schools were closed when the war ended? What happened? They were dissolved?

LI: Yes. That were the teachers were again in a normal way. They were, I told you that one of them was an academical person in philology and he re-become a professor.

JF: They were reinstated in their former positions?

LI: Yes.

JF: Was there an agreement that the students who were in these Jewish schools could be accepted in the medical schools in Romania?

LI: Yes. Yes.

JF: Did you have to go through any kind of tests, or were you automatically allowed to enroll?

LI: No, the tests was the exams. You can remain or you went out.

JF: From the previous year?

LI: Yes.

JF: So that you automatically were allowed to re-enter as a Jew in a Romanian medical school?

LI: Yes, but we had, how to say? The exams we have had in that year, when all years, when finishing there are some exams in the middle and in the last part. They were very interested who is Jewish to make him a very good examination. It came out that the Jewish were better prepared in many areas than the others.

JF: Were the exams fair, as far as fairly graded, as far as the Jews were concerned?

LI: No, as far as their scores, not so. But it was not so important. Important was the contest.

JF: You were still allowed to continue?

LI: Yes.

JF: What happened when you were back in medical school under the Romanian system? What happened with the other medical students, the non-Jewish medical students? Was that a difficult issue?

LI: It was a difficult issue because they never become friendly with us.

JF: They never did?

LI: No, they never did. Very few of them did, very few. I finally have someone who was friendly with me when again, when again we were able, all of us, or some of us, we were able to help them in one way or another. Or to give them something. And never was there sort of friendship like a friendship between us, to came to my family, to have a chat, or something around the school, or around learning or, "You have a book where I shall learn with you," or something like that.

JF: Did you and your family talk after the war about leaving Romania?

LI: Oh, sure.

JF: And, what made you decide to stay?

LI: Sure. I wanted to leave Romania and I told my father. My father knew that his boss, the Jewish boss was in Palestine. He went to Palestine. You know what people went there, people who was very, very wealthy and could send some money there, or could send something to have something there. They--or people who was pushed to go, as my cousin, who was in a bad situation to remain there, or someone who had nothing, who wanted to, who thought that is the only possibility to remain alive. And many of them when we know that many of them were killed by this man that was stopped and after *Struma* and so we heard about that was there were not so many that wanted to. After the war, there were some who wanted to go. It was easier but they remained in Cyprus, again, to stay in Cyprus and to be sent in Palestine little by little until '48.

JF: Is this what your parents were afraid of, of being caught in Cyprus if they tried to get out?

LI: No, at that time there was no problem. I didn't want to go out because I wanted to finish my studies, my medical studies. I knew that going out, I would not be able.

JF: You would have trouble?

LI: I shall have some trouble and I wanted to finish that. My father wanted to go back in his home. Yes.

JF: Did you get your house back?

LI: Yes. Do you know how? She didn't want to go out. No. She had a very good lawyer and the lawyer of my father was a very stupid one, and because my father wanted so hard to go there immediately, he had to give her something. I don't know what, he never told me because I was so angry about that gesture of his, and to make change after being so--my parents to my uncle's house and I being at my aunt, at the last part of the war, we found a little apartment for rent, when my father was able to make accounting with more effective. And then, we were again together and we have a little apartment where we were in, and he promised, he made the change with this lady. The lady took up in that apartment and we to go in our house.

JF: And, she was agreeable to that?

LI: She was, but for us to give her also the possibility to make the movement, and my father ran to the men who was ready to move us to our house to move her back. That was after some months when the government changed. If she would have been in that house, she would have had to go out...

JF: Anyway. [Pause] Your father did not want to leave Romania ?

LI: No, he wanted. I have to tell you other thing. I don't know if he come to lose sight, he couldn't see, little by little, and once we thought that he was dealing with his accounting in a room who was all the time lighted not by the normal light and...

JF: He was becoming blind?

LI: He had a glaucoma...

JF: Ah!

LI: And this glaucoma he didn't want to tell us that he cannot see until I saw him going so afraid and hurting himself in something, he couldn't see. And one gave him an operation for the right eye, and one told me that he will have the sight that he had before the operation and the other one was a good eye, and with no one knowing why he lost all the sight after the operation and was a while he couldn't work anymore.

JF: He lost all the sight in one eye? In one eye?

LI: And, then, he lost--he went with the other eye and he worked. He worked very hard, he was very happy to work, and the lady who was the boss was very hot, was very tough to him and he was very irritated. I don't know, but all the doctors couldn't tell me. It was the situation he had during the war to pull that and to make all these, or you know that he was sent to take crops out from, that was the work that he did and to [unclear]. No one knows, and no one knows even now what is the cause of glaucoma. No one from his family has ever had glaucoma. He was the first one. And finally, he had another operation, he had many operations on the two eyes and finally the government was, the Socialist government and we told them, "We give you all our belongings. Let him go out to have the operation because the last was a fault, the last operation was a fault here and was a hemorrhage, a vitreous hemorrhage. Is a long story. A big doctor, a big eye doctor from Switzerland came to Romania to see the best poet from Romania and being there he saw many patients, many problems, and I was a student, or a doctor even in that time. I wanted to show my father to him and when he saw that, he stated many things to be done immediately why was not done to him and I understood that he has not to remain there, and I wanted from the government to let me--that was after--to let me go or to send my father with someone else, I don't want to do something bad, but for him to go to have this operation. It was an operation done by an American doctor, Rosen or something like that, and by a French doctor, Katz. Both were very French and very American and they didn't allow it, allow us. No, we had to go in Russia and I explained to them that Russia has a very good school for eyes but not that, you know. That is a special operation, and finally they let us go in East Berlin, in East Berlin, and the professor we have the letter for jumped the wall in that time, and was another one who came from...

JF: He jumped the wall!

LI: Not jumped the wall. He went.

JF: He got in.

LI: He went, he renounced to be in East Berlin. He wanted to be in the West Berlin. And he went in the West Berlin.

JF: So he had left.

LI: He left. I, that was a juggle. My job to juggle. He did something to go beside the wall, and my father was there and was the surgery was done by another doctor who did that operation only two times and was a good--he could have some good result but, you know, you have to take from a corpse the vitreous and to put in another eye and that was not good taken or good...

JF: A transplant?

LI: A transplant. A transplant that was probably someone who had TB and he gave a sort of, not TB, another infection, an awful infection and because he thought not to have a septicemia for a foreigner and not to be killed, he took out the eye completely and my father lived for 18 years, and no one could tell us--and it was sure a [unclear] operation. No one could tell us if that glaucoma can come from what he was pushed to do.

JF: During the war?

LI: Right.

JF: Were you unable to leave in general after that time once the Socialists were in power?

LI: When I finished from medical school it was not more able. We were not allowed as a doctor to go out.

JF: They didn't want to lose you as a physician?

LI: Yes, I thought, but no one told me, I had had a friend who did that.

JF: Who got out, you mean?

LI: She was very cute. I don't know if I can tell you, but she was very cute. She went to a nursing school and she did the nursing school or technical school or laboratory school for some months, and she got a paper and she thought then, "I am a nurse. I am a technician."

JF: She didn't tell them that she was a physician and she got out? She came here?

LI: No, she is in Israel.

JF: So, you were kept because of your medical training?

LI: Yes, and after that, when I married, it was so. One time the doctor could go out but the engineer cannot and so on. My husband is an engineer and the good thing was, a very good thing was done by this man, the human rights, and when Gerald Ford came in Romania. And the good thing was that Romania needed money from America.

JF: And that's how you got to get out? It was an exchange? Your father died after you came here, or while you were still in Romania?

LI: No, this year it will be 10 years that he died.

JF: And your mother came with you?

LI: My mother came because her sister was here and her brother. Romania gives you the possibility to go out when you have first grade relatives.

JFt What year was it, then, that you came to the United States?

LI: Because her sister was here and her brother.

JF: What year was it?

LI: Ah, what year was it? In '79, in '79, yes. We went out from Romania in '78 but we remained in Paris for awhile. They had to do all the papers.

JF: And then you came here? Is there any thing else that you want to add to your story?

LI: My story is that I think that Jewish people want to become, to be absorbed. Has to think that what happened between that war that no one Jew, no one Jew, despite the fact that he has another name or has another religion or has another situation, they didn't escape. They has to remember. They were forced to remember that they are Jews. That is the--that it doesn't matter. I read, here is something very interesting in that situation also. I read a book written by Renate Offit [phonetic]. I don't know if you know it. It was a minister sometime in French government with that name, and this one is himself or his brother René who wrote a book and it's about some very renowned personalities in that world who have in their background a grandmother or a grandfather or someone who was a Jew, and there are very renowned families in all Europe and in England and between the most renowned families, noble families. Not only Disraeli.

JF: His was just well-known.

LI: Yes, and there are others and, if I can, I shall tell you about Charles de Gaulle and about some of the royalties from Belgium, etc. What I want to tell also, is for some Jews to go to visit Auschwitz, despite the fact that they will have some nightmares, but it's to be seen because you can try, you can try to forgive, as Ben Gurion said, you can try to forgive but you have not to forget. I don't know why to forget who?

*Tape four, side two:*

JF: You were saying, "Who to forget?"

LI: Yes. And to go not only to Auschwitz, but to go to Prague and to see the old temple and the new temple and the cemetery and what little children what from some camps drew. And there are their drawings. They are very interesting drawings. There are their dreams and their dreams was food. They dreamt on food.

JF: You went into a speciality after medical school when you were in Bucharest, in pediatrics.

LI: Yes.

JF: Your experience with children, with young children who had, some of whom I would imagine had been born during the war and had been quite young during that time, what did you notice, what observations can you make about what effect that experience had had on them?

LI: When I came in, my speciality was not so immediately after the war, but after the war was a very bad situation, economical situation and we have very few food, and not normal food. We have not a normal tea to drink. We have something a chemical tea, or we have to, more corn flour...

JF: Corn meal.

LI: Corn meal, and something like that, and very many suffered from hypervitaminosis or hypovitaminosis, or something like that and it was very big poliomyelitis.

JF: A lot of polio?

LI: Oh, it was a very big epidemic in '49, '48 or '49, and in '52, something like that.

JF: You think that these diseases were in response to the malnutrition during the war?

LI: Not only malnutrition and with the bad situation of housing, and an example was poliomyelitis came in Romania through Yugoslavia, through people who came from Yugoslavia in Romania. And it was very hard to stop that because of housing problems. There were very many.

JF: You are talking about the crowding now?

LI: Yes. You know that we had--how to say? There were people also, poor people who had to stay in any place. They couldn't build houses or buildings and then they put people to stay in--if you had three rooms and you are a man and a wife, then you need only one room. The other two bedrooms go to another family or to other two families even, and in one apartment were many families with one cook and it was absolutely very amusing, very abnormal life.

JF: What about psychiatric or psychological disorders in the children that you were seeing as a result of the war years?

LI: I was not a --I was a pediatrician in that time.

JF: But as a pediatrician did you see...?

LI: I saw very many chronic and not so much--I have seen very many mental retarded, and I have seen very distorted families because of their children mental retardation or chronic disease, or something like that.

JF: Are you relating these chronic diseases or retardation to anything specific during the war?

LI: Could be, sure, absolutely, could be the war and with the food restriction and other things like that. I have had a family in that time. That is another history.

JF: Is there anything else that you want to add before we stop for today?

LI: We will stop. I have a headache.

JF: I want to thank you very, very much.