

Margareta was born in Gerta Mica, [Romania](https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/romania) in 1938. According to the 1930 Romanian Census, approximately four precent of the people identified themselves as being Jewish. She lived with her mother, father, and older sister. When Margreta was growing up, her and her family, including her grandparents who lived nearby, were forced to wear [Yellow Stars](https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/jewish-badge-during-the-nazi-era). Margareta didn’t understand why until she got older. Her father and uncle were taken to Budapest and put in jail. Margareta’s father, Samuel, wrote to her mother, Ilona, telling her that the Nazi forces had taken him from Hungary to Germany. After Margareta's father wrote to her mother, Nazi forces began to collect the Jewish people in smaller towns and bring them to [Satu Mare](https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/gallery/romania-maps), where they were holding people in temples.

When Ilona saw this, [she never would have imagined that it would have lasted for over a year](https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/gallery/romania-photographs). Her mother took her because she was the youngest and ran away. Margareta's mother left her older sister with her grandparents. Margareta would never see her older sister or grandparents again. Margareta's father had a very good friend who knew someone in another village and took them there. Margareta and Ilona were hidden in an attic for two months. This attic did not have a chimney and it was very hot and often full of smoke. Her mother constantly told Margareta to keep quiet otherwise they would be killed. One day, Margareta recalls she was going to scream and dance because she was choking on smoke and couldn't breathe.

Ilona sent word to her father's friend from the small village, and he eventually took them into the woods. Margareta and her mother were in a cave for over a year. Margareta and her mother had to lie down or sit a specific way in order to fit. Her father's friend couldn't come to see them often because the Nazis were watching him and his family. When he did come, they would receive very little food, water, and oil. When it would rain, the water would come through the roots and left the cave damp. Ilona was constantly telling her to be quiet and they were only allowed to exit the cave in the middle of the night. Because of this experience, Margareta has suffered from terrible arthritis since the age of six. Eventually, Romania was liberated by the Russians.

For several months after the end of the Second World War, Margareta would cry and be frightened at the sight of people. One weekend, her mother’s very good friend took Margareta to her house so her mother would be able to rest. Prior to this moment, Margareta and Ilona had no knowledge of whether or not her father was alive. Samuel had taken a train to the larger city of Satu Mare and needed to rent a horse and carriage to bring him home to his family. He just so happened to knock on the door of her mother’s friend. This was the first time Margareta met her father, although, it was not the reunion she expected because her older sister had perished in the Holocaust.

Her and her father travelled home and her parents gave birth to a girl, Margareta’s younger sister. Margareta was the only Jewish child left in the surrounding villages and people used to come from far and wide to see her. She was considered to be a miracle child.

After the war, Margareta was introduced to her husband, Mayer (also a Holocaust survivor who survived Auschwitz) and the two got married six months later. Margareta and her family had been applying for passports and visas to come to the United States. Her mother, father, and younger sister were approved for theirs. However, Mayer and Margareta were not approved because they had a small child. Margareta’s parents left Romania in 1960 and they had sent back all that they could to Margareta and her family. It was very difficult for Mayer to get a full-time job because they had applied to leave the country. Eventually, they received word that their papers had been approved. They first had to travel to Vienna, where Margareta experienced antisemitism from the person who rented a bedroom to them. They lived in one bedroom for four months until they were able to leave and join her parents and sister in the United States in 1965.

When they emigrated to the United States, Mayer worked as a delivery man and Margareta worked in sales in different department stores like B. Altman and Loehman’s. Margareta and Mayer were married for almost sixty-five years before he passed away from Covid in 2020. Margareta’s proudest achievement is having her daughter, son-in-law, and two grandchildren, whom she adores immensely. She is also very proud to live in the United States.