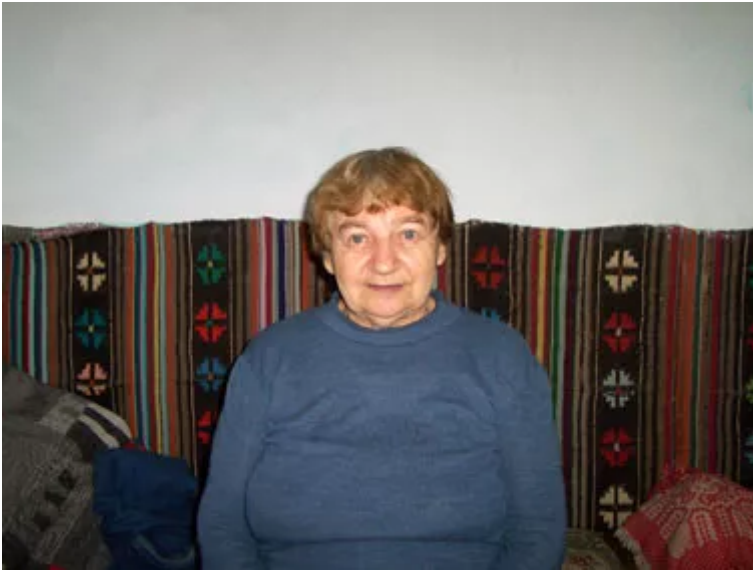


Fani Cojocariu



This is I, Fani Cojocariu, in my home. The photograph was taken in 2006.

I wasn't married. In fact, I mentioned this before: when you reach an older age you shouldn't mention you weren't married. For what would a stranger say? "Oh, the devil himself wouldn't marry her!" It no longer sounds right, not having been married, you should rather say: "I was, but my husband died." It is nicer than saying you weren't married - it means no one courted you. I didn't have any reasons for not getting married. My sisters were the ones who were picky. They didn't want to marry just anybody. For there were Jews here, but they were poorer, more inferior - they didn't want any of those, they wanted something better. Still, the young men of better condition wanted someone from a big family. We were in-between. And there you go, that's why they remained single. By then, people said: "If they didn't want to, why didn't you marry them?" I had a saying, I used to say: "Since they can wait, why should I hurry? I can wait too, can't I?" And furthermore, at this age, one of two would surely be no more...

I can't observe the Yom Kippur fast. It happens all the time. It's as if the devil urges me to eat during the fast. I fast until 4 o'clock in the afternoon, at most, I can't fast longer than that, my stomach starts to gnaw - to weaken my will, wouldn't you know it!

Whatever tradition I still observe nowadays is the Sabbath. What more can I do? I don't work, don't wash, I steer clear of those things. I light candles on Friday evening, but I can't find those long white candles on the market, the kind that you must light on that occasion, nowadays candles come in small round metal cases, I still have some of those. I can buy long yellow candles, but you are allowed to burn yellow candles only on Chanukkah - you must light candles for 8 successive days on that occasion, but I don't really do that, to be honest. You must light an odd number of candles on Friday evening - either 1, or 3, or 5. I light 3 candles, for 3 persons: my mother, my father, and my sister. When I light them, I pray to God in Romanian or in Yiddish to give me strength, good health, so that I can still walk on my legs, so that I can look after myself - I think about the situation I am in. But I see I pray in vain, for it is going from bad to worse.

I have a heart condition, I have a case of hernia, I have asthma just like my mother, and this is only to list just a few things I'm ailing from... But I have endured hardships ever since I was a child, I lived in the cold for so long in our home... I used to go to sleep with my feet numb with cold, and they wouldn't get warm all night long. That's how they stayed until I woke up in the morning, numb with cold. Where do you think my rheumatism comes from? And to think I still wish things were well.