A TEARFUL `THANKS' THAT WAITED 47 YEARS - SEATTLE MAN SHARES A WORLD WAR II SECRET

By JOSHUA COOPER RAMO   July 14, 1989   Publication: THE SEATTLE TIMES   Page: E1   Word Count: 514

Julia Symchuk tried to keep a stern expression when she saw Henry Friedman, the Seattle man her family had once sheltered from the Nazis.

But when the Ukrainian woman who had flown here saw him, his wife, children and grandchildren, she burst into tears, fell into Friedman's embrace and buried her head in his shoulder. The two were reunited at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport last night. Friedman had seen Symchuk last year for just a few hours in her village in the Ukraine and had arranged for her to visit the United States. ``I am so excited that she is coming here to see my family; I'm just flying,'' Friedman said before she arrived. Forty-seven years ago, the 17-year-old Symchuk worked as a maid for the conquering Germans in the Ukraine. One day, as she was sweeping the police station, she overheard Gestapo plans to arrest Friedman's father. ``She ran from the station and to our farm and warned my father,'' Friedman, 60, said. ``She would have been killed if anyone found out.'' Symchuk, who spoke Russian to an interpreter, said her mother and Friedman's mother decided the Symchuk family would hide the Friedmans. And they did. For 17 long and frightening months the Friedman family hid in the Symchuks' small house. Symchuk's mother slipped what little food she could to the Friedmans. Even when the Germans carted Julia and her brother off to a work camp - the camp where Julia's brother was to die - the Symchuks stayed silent. ``It was very hard for us, and it was very scary,'' Symchuk recalled. Of

the 15,000 Jews who lived in the area in 1940, only 100 were left alive after 1944. ``It was the most horrible kind of slaughter,'' Friedman said. The Friedmans and the Symchuks had been acquainted for some time. They lived near each other in the small village of Suchowalam.Hiding Jews, however, was never a popular cause. ``There was a lot of anti-Semitism there,'' Friedman recalled.``It didn't affect them, and it saved our lives.'' The anti-Semitism was so strong that the Friedman family waited 47 years to thank Symchuck. Friedman's father, afraid that the Symchuks might be harmed by lingering anti-Semitic resentment, died without revealing the name of the family. When Henry Friedman returned to his village last year, he remembered only the first names of the people who hid his family and followed a mental map drawn when he was a boy almost 50 years ago to the small village home where he remembered being hidden. There he found Julia Symchuk. ``I knew who she was right away, and there was just an incredible feeling in my heart,'' Friedman said. Sitting at the airport last night, with his grandson on his left knee and his right arm around the diminutive Symchuk, Friedman smiled broadly and praised the Symchuk clan. ``A heart of gold,'' he said. ``They just had a heart of gold.'