

Tobiash Starozum With His Friends



My friends and I, Tobiash Starozum, (on the left). Photo made in Lodz, Poland, in 1935. We were friends when we were at school and had a lot of trust in one another. Many of my friends perished in the ghetto in Lodz.

I went to school in a year's time - in 1923. It was a non-religious Jewish school, organized by the Bund Party for children of workers. My parents paid a small fee for my studies. We studied mathematic, Yiddish, Jewish and world history and geography. We studied in Yiddish. Boys and girls studied together in our school. Our teacher was a kind middle-aged woman. She was a Jew, of course. We had to come to school clean and tidy. Every day we had our ears, hands and nails checked for cleanness. Children, especially Jewish children, were more obedient at that time. There were about 30 of us in the class. We observed Jewish traditions at school, but they were explained as part of the history of Jewish people.

On summer vacation I went to my grandmother Perl in Grabovo. There was more space to play there and I had good friends to play with. My friends were only Jewish children in Grabovo. My schoolmates were children of workers that knew that they were going to become workers after finishing school. My classmates were children of our neighbors. I remember Moshe, a shoemaker's son, that became a shoemaker himself and Pinia, a textile worker. We finished school in 1931, but continued to be friends. I finished a lower secondary school, 7 years, when I was 16.

After finishing school I began to assist my father. I worked with him until the war. I got up at 8 in the morning and sat beside my father to learn his profession. My mother's task was to sweep floors at our work area. Our working day lasted from 8 in the morning till 8 in the evening with half an hour for lunch. At 8 pm I could go to play with my friends in the yard. In my teens I began to met with Jewish girls. I liked to read. There were many books published in Yiddish at that time. I liked historical novels and adventure books. Later I studied Polish and began to read in Polish. There were Jewish theaters in all Polish towns. We often went to the theater. My mother and father also liked theater. On Saturday we went to visit relatives. We got along well with our relatives. All women in the family were good at cooking, but my mother was the best. Even my memories are mouth watering. How delicious was her Gefilte fish! My father and mother didn't go Mikve or synagogue. On Sunday we went to sauna. There were Polish and Jewish visitors to the sauna, but there were no conflicts. I went to the sauna with my father and my sister and mother went

together, too.

We read newspapers and had discussions with my friends and parents about the situation in Germany, but such is human nature that one never believes that something bad may happen to him. A war seemed to be far away from us.