

Helena Najberg



This is me, Helena Najberg, when I was a child. The photo was taken in some studio, but I don't know where exactly. Somewhere in Lodz of course. I'm 4, maybe 5 years old here, so it probably was taken in the 1920s.

I was born on 5th March 1923, in Lodz. And I have lived all my life in an area bordered by 5 streets. I was born at 9 Zeromskiego Street, we later lived on 11 Listopada [currently Legionow Street], later at 25 Zawadzkiego Street [currently Prochnika Street] and after the war at 12 Gdanska Street. I've been living here since 1945. We moved like this for financial reasons. Father must have gotten a raise at work and we started to make ends meet and Mother was very thrifty. I was born at home, with a midwife, it wasn't fashionable then to give birth in a hospital, but at home. I spent my first years at home with Mother.

My house was not a typical Jewish house. Parents only went to the synagogue once a year, for Judgment Day. That was the only time it was so traditional. They never took us, children. After they got back, we'd all eat dinner and that's all I know about this holiday. It was done more for the sake of the family. Because both families, from Mother's side and from Father's side were very pious. So they followed this tradition, so we had contact with it, we knew what those customs were.

When I was 7 years old I started attending a private gymnasium, Jozef Ab's gymnasium. That was in 1930. This school was located at number 8 Zielona Street. And I remember this Ab until this day from before the WWII. It was a Jewish school, but the classes were taught in Polish. Ab's school was

the only one I attended before the war broke out. And the only school I ever went to. I passed my 'small finals' and that was it.

After school I studied English and took piano lessons. My cousin taught me. I took piano lessons for 2 years and I could play some tunes and I took English lessons, but I didn't learn anything.

My favorite pastime when I was a child was reading. I've been reading since I was 4. I couldn't live without a book. If I didn't have a book for the evening, I couldn't sleep. My favorite book was 'John Christopher' by Romain Rolland.

When the war broke out I was in Lodz. I was supposed to go to school on the first of September. But the schools were closed, because the war broke out. So we, kids, were glad because of that. It only turned out later who those Germans were and what they did to people.