

Berta Grunstein At Chanukkah Celebration



The photo was taken at Chanukkah, one can see it was winter time. The first person from left in the first row is the wife of rabbi Rosen. The second from left is Mrs. Schmidt, she used to collect the community membership fee for a long time. She worked and lived at the community, where today the community kitchen is; they gave her lodgings there for she worked for the community. She had had a family, but her husband died while they were living there. I'm the third from left in the first row, I'm wearing a hat.

On high days rabbi Rosen sometimes came here from Bucharest together with his wife. She was a real lady. She was also a lawyer like Mr. Rosen, that's how they got to know each other. They always came by plane, and I welcomed them at the airport with flowers. Sometimes it was only his wife who came by plane from Bucharest, and the rabbi came by car from Moldova. Generally they traveled further to Kolozsvar. If they stayed overnight, they stayed at the Continental Hotel, that was the most elegant hotel back then. So we rented a room there, and we laid the table, we had tea, coffee, sardine, cheese, olives, bread, things like that.

I started to work at the Jewish community a very long time ago; I worked for thirty-one years. Without anyone sending me, unasked I started to visit elder people, I wrote reports, I was some kind of social worker. I visited elder people; there were many old persons, so I brought them challah made by me. Poor people, they always used to tell me I should not bring them anything, just go and visit them. Whether they got any support from the Jewish community of Bucharest, I don't know that, it was a long time ago.

Once leaders came from the Bucharest community, and they chose me and appointed me as an assistant at the Jewish community; they said a person was needed there - the community was large, the synagogue was full, it was some thirty years ago. I spoke and asked them why they didn't establish a kosher canteen. There were many students here, and a kosher canteen would have been in a good place, but they said it was too late, there weren't enough people.

On high days it was me who organized the festive dinner. On Yom Kippur, when fasting was over, they made grilled meat for dinner, and I baked the cake, three or four hundred hamantashen, which is the specialty of Purim.

For Seder night I prepared dinner from thirty or thirty-five kilograms of meat, sixty kilos of potatoes and thirty kilos of beet. I presented the list of what I needed at the community, and they bought the things. They gave eggs, oil and meat as well. I had to buy the rest, but it was well organized. There was a Hungarian family, who for each Pesach brought us thirty kilos of beet for pickles, but I had bought the horse-radish in advance. The entire preparations started one week before the high day, because the horse-radish and the beet had to mix well. I put on the flowers and the decoration on the last day to make it fresh. We were cooking khremzlakh for two hours, but it was the last thing to prepare, because it had to be fresh.

During the Ceausescu era Jewish shochets came to Marosvasarhely to cut kosher meat for Israel at the slaughterhouse, and they exported it to Israel. Three shochets came together with their families, and a mashgiach, who had lived for two years in Vienna before, then he came here. He's the person who supervises whether the meat is kosher or not. They lived here for about two years; they all stayed in the Furnica block of flats [in the block which is near to the store called Furnica], because the Securitate usually watched the strangers, everywhere in the town.