

Bronek Wyszegrod



This is a studio portrait of my nephew, Bronek Wyszegrod. He was the son of my oldest step-sister, Sala Wyszegrod.

This picture was taken in Lodz, in the 1930s. It survived the war due to a fortunate incident: before the war, my mother had mailed it to her sister, Ruth, who lived in the USA.

My mother was my father's second wife. The first wife had died. I don't know anything about her. My father had three children from that first marriage: Sala, Fela and Hersz.

These children were all placed in an orphanage in Lodz – apparently, my father just couldn't manage on his own with three children.

It wasn't until after my parents got married that these kids returned home. And I was raised together with them. All three completed elementary school.

These were schools for Jewish children, and the only difference from Polish schools was that Saturdays were free, and that Judaism was the religion taught at school.

My older stepsister was named Sala, and the younger one was Fela, and the step-brother's name was Hersz. We were step-siblings, but this did not make any difference, we didn't feel it that way. They addressed my mother as 'auntie.'

The oldest sister was 14 or 15 years older than me, it must have been 1931 or 1932 when she got married. But we stayed in close touch with one another after that.

She lived in Baluty, at 48 Limanowskiego Street, in a single room with her husband, Pinkus Wyszegrod, their son Bronek, and her husband's mother.

I remember this room in Baluty quite well, because later, during the war, I lived there myself, with my parents. During the war, as you know, the Baluty area was the ghetto.

I remember what this room looked like before the war: the door was in the middle of the wall, and on the left there was a tile stove.

Behind the stove there were two beds, where Sala and Pinkus and their small son all slept. To the right of the door there was a curtain which separated off the space used by my sister's mother-in-law.

And in the middle there was a table and some chairs. It was a sunny room. The water and the toilet were both outside, in the yard, but they did have electric light.

When I was seven years old, I was already an aunt: Bronek was born in 1932. Sala and Pinkus had a small ice-cream shop. It was almost exactly opposite their apartment – on the other side of the road. Sala used to help her husband run this shop.

An ice-cream cost 5 groszy. It was scooped up with a spoon into a wafer. In the summer they were quite busy, but in the wintertime it all came to a standstill, maybe they managed to sell some wafers and some chocolate, but it was not a good business then.

Pinkus had more free time then so he studied various languages, for instance English and Esperanto. He was very intelligent, and he just taught himself – out of books.