

Panni Koltai



This is me on the stairs leading up to the Castle of Eger. The photo was taken in 1932. When I finished middle school in 1929, I also wanted to continue studying like my sister Piri, but I couldn't. My parents had more money for the education of my older sisters; by the time it was my turn, the money was gone. Sewing was almost the only trade that one could always do for a living for sure. So, they decided that the girls should learn sewing. Girls didn't really have the possibility to learn any other trade at that time, especially if they were Jewish. My parents apprenticed me to a man, also a tailor, who was an acquaintance of my father, but I didn't like it there at all. He was a Jewish tailor from abroad, not from Hungary. He was a women's tailor. I was there for only a very short time because I kicked up no end of a racket at home about not liking to be there. But I still learned how to sew, since we all knew this trade kind of instinctively because Dad was a tailor. The

Greiners, my husband's family, lived in the same street as us. I went to work for Dora Greiner. Three or four of us worked in her workshop. Dora was our boss. She was very strict; she used to upbraid me all the time before she became my sister-in-law. After her brother married me, I used to tell her, 'You were such a nasty boss, it was horrible'. I worked there as an apprentice for a couple of years and I didn't get a salary; we were happy that they took me on in the first place. After I finished my apprenticeship, I got a salary for my work. But we didn't have set working hours. We were told at what time we had to start in the morning. I can't remember what it was any more. I guess it must have been 7 or 8 in the morning. And in the evening we had to stay until we finished the fancy work on a piece or whatever we were doing. As long as the Greiner girls lived in Eger, I worked in their workshop.