

Anna Lanota With Her Cousins On Holiday



This is in the country, in Skryhiczyn, in the vacation.

We worked in the fields there, binding the stooks and threshing. In the evening my uncle [Chaim Halperin] harnessed up to the cart and we would go to the river to bathe, because we were terribly dirty after work.

You can see how tired we were, because my uncle was exacting; you had to work from early morning until it was finished.

This is by my uncle's barn. These are his daughters:

the first on the left is Hanka, next to her Ida Merzan, and the last from the left Sara Halperin. Next to Ida her friend is sitting, I don't know her name, and I'm next to her. And this dog is Sierka.

My father's family owned the estate of Skryhiczyn near the little town of Dubienka in the Lublin province. There was a short time in Tsarist Russia when Jews were allowed to buy land, and then my grandfather's mother, Ita Rottenberg, bought Skryhiczyn from a German.

Jews rarely owned land. Skryhiczyn was later the property of my grandfather, Szmuel Rottenberg, and his brother Chaim.

Grandfather had one manor and his brother another. My grandfather's manor was burned down during World War I.

Grandfather died in 1915 in Odessa, so I never knew him. He had 10 children, Zlata, Hena, Fajga, Chaja, Masza, Natan, Henoch, Josel, Mordechaj, and Szloma, my father.

After Grandfather's death the estate was divided up into farms for each of the children, each one with 60 hectares of land plus so many hectares of woodland and meadow.

Each of the children built themselves a separate house. Aunt Masza and her husband Chaim Halperin had their own one.

I was very attached to that family. Aunt Masza was truly an amazing woman; we all liked her very much, and all the women in the village used to go to her for advice.

It was a little strange in her house, because they never cooked dinners - when you were hungry you went to the larder and got some food yourself.

My aunt didn't have time to cook, because she was always very busy, either in the fields or making butter. And my uncle worked with the farmhand in the fields.

That girl at the front is Ida, Aunt Masza and Uncle Chaim Halperin's daughter. Later her surname was Merzan. She was born in Odessa in 1907.

When the Revolution broke out she went to Kishinev, to her father's family. She did her school-leaving exams there and then came to Poland.

After the vacation she went to Warsaw and enrolled for a course for pre-school teachers run by Janusz Korczak. She lived in the home for future pre-school teachers in Korczak's orphanage. Later Korczak employed her there.

Two years before the war she started work in the Centos home in Otwock. After that I worked there too, and she was my immediate superior. She got married and in 1938 had a daughter. In September 1939 we reached Kovel together.

From there she left for the Soviet Union. She came back to Poland in 1945. Just after the war she had a son.

She worked writing pedagogical advice for parents for various magazines, for *Moje Dziecko* [My Baby], for *Przyjaciółka* [Girlfriend], for *Gazeta Żydowska* [The Jewish Newspaper].

I don't remember her having a permanent job; she always wrote, she wrote books, and wrote for magazines. She lived in Warsaw. She died a few years ago.