

Judita Schvalbova With Her Parents



In this photo you can see my parents, Jozef Donath and Melania Donathova, nee Pickova, and me. The picture was taken in 1938. In the background is the Zilina town square.

I don't remember any exceptional tomfoolery from my childhood. I was a very good child. Most of my memories are from the post-war period, because I was nine when the war ended. I only remember fragments from before the war. At my grandparents', the Donaths' place I had a little dog. At home I played with a midget rooster. At that time there was a fowl pest in Zilina, and he got it too. He died. We children buried him in a shoebox.

During my childhood Zilina had maybe 18,000 people. As a child it didn't overly interest me, but for sure it didn't have more than 20,000. Just recently I read that in the pre-war period there might have been about 3,600 Jews living in the town. From my childhood I don't remember a mikveh, yeshivah and similar Jewish institutions, because as a six-year-old it didn't interest me very much and my parents absolutely didn't practice this. Now that I'm retired, I read that there really was a mikveh here. There were two communities in Zilina. There was a Neolog community. Its members built one large, modern synagogue which stands to this day, but now is used for cultural purposes. And then there was another, smaller group of Orthodox Jews, who had a tiny little synagogue. Even after the war there were services held in the Orthodox synagogue, up until the time of the two waves of emigration to Israel. Up until then it was relatively full. I don't remember the names of the rabbis that were in Zilina in the pre-war period. During the war religious life didn't exist, I was very small at that time. After the war, cantor Halpert served there for a time, he later left for Ireland. Mr. Halpert married us, so that's why I remember him.