

Zuzanna Mensz' Mother Mariem Szyfra Rosset



This is a photo of my mom. It was taken in Lodz. I think, she visited her father at the time. She was very young.

My Mom's name was Mariem Szyfra. I found out it was 'Mariem' later, I'd always thought she was called 'Maria'. She was born in 1886, she was the eldest child. I don't know when she got married exactly, I'm assuming she wasn't very young. She met her husband through a matchmaker. I heard she also tried to liberate herself [emancipate], just like Aunt Chana. As all the girls from Skryhiczyn she completed five years of gymnasium, she used to learn French, she had some education. But eventually she let them find her a husband. My Father was called Mosze Rosset. They lived in Volodymir-Volyns'kyy but later, still before World War I, moved to Lublin with my eldest sister.

Mom was very pretty, a bit plump. She was a very good person. After Father's death in 1933, for example, we rented an apartment in Volodymir and we had a neighbor who was even poorer than us. She was a widow with two children, who made her living selling things at the market and fairs. She cooked a meal only once a week. Mom, although really poor herself, used to take this woman's daughter with us on summer holidays to feed her up a bit. Mom was remarkably absent-minded. There were jokes about the whole Horowicz family, they were all considered scatter-brains, they often got distracted, absent-minded, forgetful, and Mom was no different, she would always lose her keys and such. She was not a very religious person, unlike my Father.

My younger sister Hilka and I were born already in Lublin. We lived there until my father's death in 1933. But we used to go to Skryhiczyn in every spring and leave at the end of summer. Mom had there 17 acres at Skryhiczyn-Folwark. She built a house. A land was leased by family Blander. We had a small profit off the land. Mom also did some tailoring, embroidering, she had a special embroidering machine, she learned how to use it and sold her products.

After my younger sister Hilka had passed her final gymnasium exams Mom sold her land in Skryhiczyn and bought a house in Falenica, just outside Warsaw. It might have been 1938. Mom wanted to live closer to us. After the outbreak of war it turned out the janitor living with us was German. When the Germans marched in she told my Mother to get out because from then on the whole house belonged to her. Mom went to Skryhiczyn and stayed there.

During the war there was a German administrator at the Skryhiczyn manor. Everyone from the family had been reportedly evicted from the manor. I don't know where they lived. And later all the Jews from that area were transported to Sobibor. I came upon a friend of my sister Hilka and she said she'd seen her on a horse wagon with the group which was to be transported to Sobibor. She urged her to escape but she didn't. Apparently, she didn't want to leave Mother alone.