

Hanus Brod And His Class



This is my brother's class photo, my brother is standing in the middle row, fourth from left.

The photo is important for me mainly because the teacher Miss Hnatova is in it, for me the paradigm of the perfect teacher, a kind and sweet woman she was. The picture was taken in the courtyard of the school we used to attend.

I think that that in those days it was this custom, that women could only be teachers or governesses up until the time they were married, after that they couldn't.

It was probably so that they could fully devote themselves to their new career in the family, so that their own children wouldn't distract them from their work with children in school.

Miss Hnatova was a beautiful woman. I really envied my brother, that he had such a teacher, we had Mr. Pokorny, I liked him too, but it wasn't Miss Hnatova... I used to go on trips with my brother's class as well.

While I didn't yet myself go to school, I think that once or twice their teacher took me with them on a school trip.

It was an amazing experience for me, to go with the teacher and with the older kids, because that was the hierarchy in those days, older boys otherwise didn't talk to those pip-squeaks. He who was in the third grade didn't talk to anyone who was in the first grade.

In the photo my brother is scowling. Actually, they're all scowling. The children saw some man with a sheet, they were pretty wide-eyed and didn't know how they're supposed to act.

Like Nohavica sings in one song: If I was born a hundred years ago...good thing that a person never knows what's waiting for him...

After the war I found out that Miss Hnatova was living in Cernosice, but somehow I never got around to visiting her. Maybe that's good. Maybe she wouldn't even have remembered me.

She was already an old lady. It's always touchy to meet with people that you somehow know like this, after years, maybe it's better to keep that beautiful memory of what they used to be like.