

Anna Hyndrakova



This picture of me was taken in Prague in 1941 by the brother of Frantisek Kowanitz, the husband of my sister Gertruda Kowanitzova, nee Kovanicova.

I used to read a lot when I was a child, and I still do. I began reading Rodokapsy [cheap paperbacks] and when my sister saw this, she started to give me books from the European Literary Club, which I read at quite a young age.

So I read novels from childhood, but only the ones by good authors, not romantic fiction or whodunits. I was also a good swimmer; in tests I used to swim across a lake with a boat going alongside me. I also did ice-skating and went skiing several times.

I went to Maccabi from the age of four and then I really wanted to go to Sokol, because I liked those disgusting Sokol girls' outfits. I asked mum and she went to the Vinohrady Sokol Hall,

sometime in 1938 or 1939, to sign me on.

However, the woman in charge said she was sorry but they didn't accept Jews. Instead I went a few times to the Workers' P.T. Unit [Physical Training], which was a kind of social democratic organization.

One time we were doing an exercise known as the 'Candle', and my insteps were stretched when one girl turned to me and said, 'You've got Jewish feet.' After that I stopped going there.

I was brought up in such a way that I was supposed to greet everyone I met. I used to say 'salutations' to my mum's friends. In September 1941, mum sewed a yellow star on my jacket and said to me:

'You needn't be ashamed of it, it isn't your fault, but you're not to greet anyone any more, as it might make them feel awkward or even threatened.' I remember going out with my friend, Bohumila, who didn't wear the star to begin with, as she was of mixed race.

We were walking together - me with the star on, her without - when we met some woman who said to my friend: 'You should be ashamed of yourself, going around with a Jewess.' When she got home she made a scene and said she wanted to wear the star, too.