

Miklos Kallos And His Schoolmates



This school photo is one of the two I still have from before World War II.

It was taken when I was in the elementary school, in the 2nd grade. It was taken 70 years ago, so it must have been June 1933.

These school photos were always taken at the end of the school year. I am the fourth from the right in the first row.

Gyorgy Balazs is also in the photo, he is the first from the left in the back row. We were in the same camp, at Buchenwald.

There was a bombing and he lost both his legs. In a typically German way, they considered those who were wounded during the enemy bombing a sort of war victims.

So they operated him and carried him back to Buchenwald. Many healthy people died, while he survived. I met him after the liberation. He left for France.

He graduated from the Polytechnic Institute, then he killed himself. There were many cases of suicide, for life is a bit schizophrenic: you live one life before the camp, and another life after.

The deportation put an end to the old life. There were some who couldn't take it and who committed suicide.

I started to go to school when I was six. I studied in Romanian during the elementary school and the first three grades of high school.

I didn't speak Romanian very well. The elementary school was supported by the Neolog Community.

Then the Hungarian Empire came and we had a Hungarian school - it was during the period when I was beginning to open my eyes towards the world, from the age of 14 to the age of 17.

I started to write in Hungarian. I'm not saying that I totally forgot how to speak Romanian, because I didn't; but my Romanian was rather poor - I made mistakes of agreement and spoke with an accent.

I went to the 'Dr. Kecskemeti Lipot' Jewish Neolog High School in Oradea. It was a Jewish school because the students were all Jewish and the teachers were Jewish too, with two or three exceptions.

By tradition, the gym teacher was not a Jew, but that changed in the later years.

Under the Romanian administration, until 1940, the music teacher had to be Romanian, and this was sometimes true for the teachers of Romanian literature too.

The Jewish touch of the school was that that a prayer was said at the beginning of the first class and at the end of the last class - these were the prayers uttered when one is called to read the Torah, two blessings.

So these two prayers replaced the national anthem or anything of the sort.