

Peter Reisz As A Little Boy



I must be around 3-4 years old in this photo which was taken in Budapest at the end of the 1930s. I'm in the courtyard of our house in Obuda. This was a one-story house where we had a one-room apartment with a kitchen and bathroom. We couldn't move back there after the war because the house had been hit by a bomb. I was born in 1935, and spent my childhood in Obuda. I attended the Jewish grade school there because you could feel that the country was turning fascist from 1938 on, and the Jewish laws had appeared. I got chased here in Obuda, when I was still a school kid. The majority of the proletarian kids would specifically hunt Jewish kids, and when they found out I was on my way to school, they would chase me, and when they caught me, they would beat me. The grade school was on Zichy Street. There was only one two-story house on that street, and

the congregation had a four-class grade school in it. The synagogue was very near the school, and I went to temple straight from class. I started school there, I started learning Hebrew there, and I could pray well from a prayer book. I only attended that school for three years, however, because of World War II. After 1935, when my parents returned from Holland, my father didn't really go to temple. I went with my mother and my grandmother, and, of course, in Jewish school with my class. We weren't kosher at home. We didn't eat pork, but we didn't keep the dairy and meat products separate, and we didn't buy kosher meat. But, say, a chicken paprikash with sour cream - that was impossible to even imagine. The customs stayed. We bought a goose in the fall, and we'd bake the fat out of it, and then we'd use the fat. In November, December, and January we'd eat goose several times, and those geese, I believe, were always kosher. For instance, if we wanted a chicken killed, we'd take it to the shochet, and he'd kill it for us. But we kept those holidays. I remember we had separate Pesach dishes. The chomets, that is, food containing yeast, was cleared out of the house. The point of that was really the cleaning. We'd get a woman - she'd come to do the washing too - who would help us, and then she would clean the whole flat, so there wouldn't be a crumb anywhere, and then we'd bring the dishes out from the attic, and we'd use them during the Pesach holiday. We'd eat matzoh, and we made pastries with the matzoh, things they hardly even know these days, dumplings out of matzoh flour, plum dumplings. When my grandfather died, my father didn't hold the ceremony at Pesach, but Seder evening was held, because we'd either go to temple, or acquaintances or friends would hold the Seder. We knew a lot of Jews, and either we'd go to their place, or they'd come to ours to hold Seder.