

Helena Pollakova, Berta Paszternakova, Bernat Paszternak And Otto Pollak



This picture was taken in the 1930s in Mariánské Lázně which is a famous spa in the Czech Republic. From the left you can see my mom Helena Pollakova, nee Paszternak, my maternal grandmother Berta Paszternakova, nee Schon, my grandpa Bernat Paszternak and my dad Otto Pollak. They were probably spending their vacation there. My grandfather on my mother's side had a religious education and he lived with my grandmother in Kosice, where he was a shammash. He was a very nice person, tall with gray hair. They always spoke Hungarian in my mom's family, so I used to call my grandfather 'aranyszoke' [Hungarian for 'golden-haired'] granddad. I was very fond of him. My grandmother was a Hungarian Jew. Both grandparents were very religious. They kept a kosher household and my grandmother wore a wig, but they were tolerant towards my parents. Although the food was not kosher in our house, they still ate it and slept over whenever they came for a visit. After getting married, my dad had kidney failure once and the doctor said that my mom would have to cut out all kosher food, unless she wanted to kill him. My devout grandparents accepted this. I remember the Friday evenings that they spent at our place. My grandfather would always bless me, before going to the synagogue. My granddad was apparently very strict as a father, but he was very kind to me. My mom always said that my grandmother was so good-natured that she could never bring herself to give her children a smack, even when they were being unbearably naughty. My grandmother died of cancer in 1936 and my grandfather died about three months later. My grandmother was over seventy, my grandfather over eighty. They both had a Jewish burial.