

Wacek Kornblum's Aunt Chawcia



This is my aunt Chawcia, my dad's favorite sister. This picture was taken in 1930s.

Her husband Benjamin was also a Kornblum, he was Father's cousin. They had two sons. One was Icchak, the other one Kuba Akiwa. Icchak was three-four years older than me, and Kuba was my age, my best friend who kept getting me in trouble. They lived in Warsaw, on 17 Panska Street. It wasn't a religious family, but a traditional one, they had a kosher kitchen. Aunt's husband was very active in Zionism. Kuba used to go to a Hebrew school, and probably belonged to Betar. They had a piggy-bank for Karen Kayemet at home and his father, whenever he could, would give money. My father didn't like it, Mom even less. Izaak was very talented. He used to play the violin, paint. He used to go to the Pilsudski School of Lithography on Konwiktorska Street in Warsaw. He also sang in a choir, in the Large Synagogue on Tlomackie, and whenever he had shows, the entire family tried to get there. I remember that synagogue as a large palace, staircase going up, lights. I felt strange there, a bit uneasy.

My best friend was Kuba Kornblum, the son of Aunt Chawcia and Uncle Benjamin. He used to come over to our place, I used to go there, we played together.

When the war started and the bombings begun, we went to Aunt Dobcia, an another sisters of Dad's, on Panska, she had a large apartment. There were lots of foreign people who didn't live in those buildings, but who, like us, were running away from other parts of the city, but nobody asked any questions. We all went to the basement, because they announced a bombing, and a bomb fell on that house. I know I lost consciousness. Everything went dark, it must have taken a while, when I woke up the basement was full of black dust, and people were pushing their way towards the exit to the stairway, I instinctively got out, and then heard some woman scream: 'Vu iz mayn man un mayne kinder?' [Yiddish: Where is my husband and my children?]. And it was my mom. Then Dad showed up and Borus and Estusia, and it also turned out that in the same house there was Aunt Chawcia with her husband, Kuba and Izaak. And when we met at the gate, it turned out Izaak wasn't able to walk. Aunt Chawcia said there was a wooden exit door, and it hit him in the head. And when we all got outside to the street, Aunt Chawcia decided to go to Aunt Frania's on Wielka Street, and Dad and Mom decided to go back to Niska. We parted and from later stories we know that Izaak died two days later.