

Feliks Nieznanowski With His Mother Hadasa Nieznanowska



This is the only photo of me, Feliks Nieznanowski with my mother, Hadasa Nieznanowska. It survived because my mother sent it to her cousin who lived in the USA. It is a studio portrait, taken in Warsaw in 1937 or 1938.

My mother was six years younger than my father, she was born in 1892. My mother worked in someone's business, sold ice cream, cakes, in Warsaw, on Chmielna near Zelazna, it was called 'Cakes and Ice-cream.' It wasn't a café, you bought and ate standing. I know from accounts that my father bought cakes there, and that's how they met. I don't know when precisely they married, but it was before 1909.

I was the youngest, born in 1926. I lived my own life, the life of a boy, a teenager. Our family was tried severely by fate. Hence my childhood wasn't like the other kids'. There was no emotional closeness, no everyday affection. My mother was an impulsive, go-ahead person, and my father was the one supposed to earn the daily bread, provide for the family, while my mother ran the house.

Before the Great Depression, I guess, my parents must have had some money because they paid for my sister's and brother's education. But then they became impoverished. I experienced the misery period, but when my sister and brother were studying, there had to be funds for that. There was a tradition in Jewish homes that first of all you had to educate your children. It needs to be said there were such ambitions but then there came impoverishment, stratification, Jewish families became numerous, with nothing to live on. I remember Jewish poverty very well - when you walked those streets in the Jewish quarter, with no sewerage, everything flowing down the gutters. Crowds of children in the courtyards.