

## Andras Gaspar And His Friends



This picture, showing the youngsters lying down, was taken in Nagyvarad, on the banks of the Koros, on the grass. In the front [in the lower part] on the left that's Andris Gaspar, on the right that's Marta Steiner, Andris' cousin. She got married in Israel, then she divorced her husband and moved to London, England. The other two are some friends. They arranged [the setting], and the fifth took the picture from above. This picture was taken before the war.

In Marta Steiner's family there were many wealthy people, and they haven't been deported. They managed to escape the deportation. How they did it, it's a secret. They allegedly bribed some SS officer, I don't know. They went to Switzerland. I felt very bad when I saw she coming home with her twins. I wanted to show her sons where she grew up. She and Andris liked each other very much. They remembered what a good time they had at the Gyilkos lake and we decided to go there. They came with a rented car they rented in Germany, I believe. On the way, I don't know how, but the deportation came up, and I remember she became so angry, she shouted: 'Don't start again with the stories about the deportation, because I'm fed up with them!' Stories... she wasn't deported, so she wouldn't hear the stories. This hurt my feelings... Andris and I we both stopped speaking, and there was dead silence in the car.

After I came home from the deportation and after I moved to Nagyvarad, I met on the Main Street Andras Gaspar, Andris. He fell on my neck, since we were friends and lived opposite to each other. During the Holocaust he was a forced laborer in Poland. To be honest, we didn't really talk about this subject. Some time ago I wasn't able to talk about this, I didn't even tell anything to my children. He was a real sportsman, he played tennis and was a swimmer. But when he came back, he was nothing but skin and bones. In the last weeks-months of detention they were all thrown in a relocation camp. He was amongst the first to come home to Nagyvarad. His elder brother has not been deported, because he, for the sake of his wife, converted to Christianity and he wasn't taken away because he wore the white armband. Andris was a late-born, her mother was 43 when she gave birth to him. He had an elder sister, who was 16 years older than him, and she didn't come home, neither. And none of his relatives, especially his mother. His father was a lawyer, but he died of heart-attack when Andris was in twelveth grade of high school, and he left them nothing. By

then his bother was already working and he had to help out his mother, while Andris had to sustain himself: he gave lessons to the weaker students for money.

When we met he was already working at a mining company, he was the manager at a clay and kaolin mine in Rev [Bihar county]. He was hired as manager although he only had a high school graduation diploma. And from then on he came to Nagyvarad every Saturday-Sunday. Andris was glad too to have someone he could talk about the things [before the war]. We were getting along very well and on Saturday nights we used to go to the Astoria, which was in vogue then. Otherwise the Astoria was owned by my ladyfriend's father. My lady-friend used to come along, she was already married. And he told me joking that, and I'll never forget this: 'We should get married!' I told them: 'Are you nuts?' I respected Andris very much, but love or something like that it was out of the question... Then he wrote a statement, it got once we moved: 'In full possession of my faculties I sign that I will take Anni as my wife.' The whole thing was a joke. I gave it a thought, because I went through a marriage once and was a love match.

And then we got married in 1948. We only had civil marriage. I didn't divorce according to the Jewish prescriptions, because we went to the Jewish community and they advised us not to, because it is a long procedure and we couldn't afford it. I got my civil divorce, I still have the decision. So my second marriage was only a civil one, with two witnesses, and after that we and our friends, former classmates went to a restaurant. I even remember that we couldn't order too much because we had no money, and I found a fishbone in my potato soup. This happened in Nagyvarad's most elite restaurant, the Transilvania. And it turned out to be such a wonderful marriage you could rarely find, to be honest. We had no arguments or any misunderstandings for 48 years.