

Irena Wygodzka In The Tatras Mountains



My father took this picture of me on a rock in Dolina Koscieliska.

It was in 1936 in Zakopane. I had that picture with me throughout the war, it was one of the few keepsakes I had.

After many years I really wanted to find that rock and I did. I had a picture taken in the same place, it was maybe in 1958. Father wasn't there any longer, but the picture has remained and so has the rock.

Almost every year we'd go on vacation. We'd leave the city for at least a month, or two. We'd take all our stuff. We'd go near Katowice, to Bystra, to Cyganski Las, sometimes to Rabka, always to southern Poland, Silesia.

I never went to the seaside before the war. Our more distant family would go with us, too, and we'd spend time there together. We'd rent cottages from peasants.

I remember this hotel in Zakopane. We'd live there and eat there. It was a Jewish hotel. The owners were Jewish, the guests were mostly Jewish too.

We met a young married couple during one of those vacations, they were staying in that hotel with us. And then we hiked in the mountains together.

We'd hike mostly in the valleys with the little sisters, we'd climb the Gubalowka, never too high. We were not professional hikers, I didn't have any special clothing, I hiked in my school coat.