

Matylda Wysznska's Aunt



This is photo of my aunt Helena Ramer from Paris. I don't know who is the other person on that picture.

My mother had three sisters and three brothers. She was either the first or the second child because she was the eldest of the sisters.

One brother, the eldest one, I think, studied in Nancy near Paris, a textile engineer.

I don't know what his name was. I called him Ma, the older ones called him Manek - for Manuel or something like that.

Later he was sent to work at a wool factory in Bucharest and married the owner's daughter, a Jewess, her name was Raisa, [married] Ramer. They had a daughter called Bianka.

During the war, when the Germans came, they fled through Bessarabia and found themselves in the Soviet Union.

After the war, he came to Poland with his family, became the head of the whole textile industry at the Textile Industry Administration in Lodz.

He is buried at a cemetery in Lodz and, to my shame, I neither attended the funeral nor have ever visited his grave.

Aunt with Bianka went to Toronto after Uncle died.

Helena Ramer was an aunt in Paris. She arrived there in 1926 to join her brother Ma who was studying there.

In Paris she met her future husband and decided to stay. She married an Austrian, and when the war started, he joined the Wehrmacht, she found herself in a camp and there, in 1940, she gave birth to a daughter called Jeann.

When her husband returned from the war, he disowned them. If that were not enough, the daughter was called Jeann Haltmeier, and he went to the court to strip her of the name.

He said she wouldn't be his daughter. Aunt Helena died in July last year 2005 at the age of ninety.

My mother's second brother I called Mis, Teddy Bear, and parents called him Samek, he was Samuel Ramer.

He was a dentist, married a dentist and they lived in Stary Sambor, today western Ukraine, Lwow district.

She was a prosthodontist, he specialized in restorative dentistry, they had a practice together.

She was Jewish and they had a beautiful boy named Romek, blue eyes, light blonde hair.

I know I twice spent the summer holidays with them in Stary Sambor before the war.

They were assimilated. Had their practice and I know they didn't even observe kosher because I remember Aunt always bought cold cuts from a certain butcher and we very much liked the ham from that butcher, his name was Baran ('ram' in Polish).

One day there was no ham and my Aunt said that Baran didn't have any ham today.

I asked whether it had to be ham from a ram, whether it couldn't be ham from a pig, for instance, and they had a hearty laugh at my expense.

You remember such silly things and you don't remember the important ones. Uncle Mis's whole family died in the Lwow ghetto.

The second aunt was my dearest, Aunt Mia, I don't know what her real name was, perhaps Miriam.

I attended her wedding under the chuppah. It was when my mother was still alive before 1936.

I know that my aunt married the owner of Leopolia, a Lwow-based paper and confectionery plant, she worked there in the office, the man fell in love with her (he was a Jew) and married her.

There was this large room somewhere in town, I don't remember it to have been a synagogue, but there was a chuppah, and I remember how Aunt was dressed because I have her wedding photo to this day.

Aunt Helen sent her a dress from Paris, so she had a beige-blue outfit - a dress and a hat - under that chuppah.

That's all I remember. None of my father's or mother's sisters were religious.

After her husband was murdered in the Janowski camp in Lwow, Mia went mad and was shot in the Lwow ghetto.

The third sister was called Mada, what her real name was, I don't know. Mada was the youngest of the sisters and was very pretty.

When the war started, she was very young, not much my elder.

She could have been in her twenties. She had beautiful, large, almond eyes. And when the war started, she disappeared.

Later everyone refused to know her, she was seen riding in a car with the Germans, and what happened to her later, I don't know. Nobody knows.

Then there was the third brother, Bernard. He lived with his wife and two sons in Katowice, a city ca. 380 km west of Lwow, 70 km west of Cracow.

His son, Gieniek, was a violin virtuoso and studied at a music school. As an 18-year old boy he played concerts across Europe.

I had a photo of his with the violin. Fleeing from the Germans, they left Katowice and set up in Lwow.

Unfortunately, the Soviets soon sent them to a camp in Siberia, where they died.