

Anna Eva Gaspar's Graduation Group Photo In The Szent Orsolya High School



This picture was taken in the Szent Orsolya (Ursuline) high school, in the yard. Only half of my classmates are in it, and one of our teachers, but I don't know her name. Our form master is not in it, she was our Latin teacher, we called her domnisoara [Ms.] Simionescu. In the high school each of us had to wear her own number and the emblem of the school. We were wearing the 'Strajer', this was the uniform we had to wear in school, a dark blue skirt, a white linen shirt and a yellow tie. We could wear a blouse only for one day, so we had to have more. [Editor's note: In 1937 Carol II, the Romanian king founded the 'Strajeria', the army-like youth organization called The Guard, for the boys and girls between the ages of 8 and 16. He united every other youth organization, including the Scouts into The Guard. The goal was to educate the youth in the spirit of obedience and willingness, the greatness of the national idea. In 1940 the legionaries liquidated the Guard.] Bock Anci sent me this picture to Nagyvarad in 1996. She was a pharmacist and she died three years ago. There were nine of us Jews from the classmates in this picture, and only three of us came home.

The custom in Nagyvarad was to make the graduation group photo each year after the graduation exams, which included the teachers and students, and then they put it in a store on the main street. We made such a photo in our last year, but I don't know why, the headmaster, Klotilda Mate, who was a nun and was in the photo, but she her picture was covered with a piece of paper.

When I was admitted to the Orsolya, it hurt my feelings a lot what happened to me there. The Orsolya was a Hungarian Catholic order. There were many girls from Bucharest, and I didn't understand how the girls from Bucharest ended up in Varad. But I never found out. I was 15 and I went together with my girlfriend. We sat down in the classroom where we could. We were four in a desk, a blond girl sat near me. On the first day Klotilda Mater came in - she was the headmistress - and she asked us where we came from, from which school, what marks we had in the school, with what mark we passed the entrance examination and other such kind of things. So she questioned us. When she asked me, I answered that I finished 'Gimnaziul Evreiesc' [Jewish middle school] - this

happened in the Romanian era [before 1940] - and the girl who sat near me, (her name was Ionescu) got up. She got up from beside me and she moved from there. This reaction was like a slap in the face for me. This was the first slap in the face what I got. Later we got acquainted with the classmates, among others with her also, and she apologized for her reaction. She thought that the Jews are like the blacks or aboriginals, who knew what was in her mind.

We were 35 girls in the class, and 12 girls were Jewish. They never let us felt that we were Jewish. For example on 1st of March everyone found a Martisor on her desk. [Editor's note: This is a Romanian folk custom, on 1st of March the boys used to give a 'marciuska' to the girls, and the men used to give that to their older and younger lady friends. This is usually a small, metallic object, which had a white-red strip, and the girls wore it on their collar.] I didn't know about this custom. And every girl got this present. We were on very good terms. I finished the first two grades of the high school in the Orsolya, this means the ninth and tenth grades now We had to pay school fees there, because it was a private high school and it belonged to the Catholic Church. It wasn't a public high school. But they were very, very nice indeed. I finished two grades there. I don't know if the school still exists. There were boarders also, they came from other towns, and all these Romanian girls lived in the hall. It was forbidden to us to enter the hall, I never saw how they lived there. The boarders had the lunch in the Orsolya's building.

We learnt music also, choral works and history of music. Our teacher's name was Mrs. Sara. She was a very skillful, laical woman. We used to sing Schubert and Brahms compositions also. We had a very good choir and we had appearances also. We learnt how to cook as well: four girls from every class on every week. There was a kitchen in the school and it was well equipped with cooking utensils and dishes. We learnt how to cook in the middle school and high school also. There were four girls from every middle school and high school class who worked in the kitchen and everybody had her duty. Somebody was responsible for the laying, the other one for the scraping and so on. But when we cooked, we did it together. We learnt how to scrap, how to do the washing-up, how to lay the table, so special things which many of us didn't learn at home. They didn't know that the knife and the spoon had to be on the right hand side, and the fork on the left hand side. Right? How should they know this? And the glass over here. There were all kind of glasses and we learnt how to put them on the table, where to put the small glass for spirit, and where to put the drinking glass... I don't know, I don't remember already. We learnt everything. In fact they took into all the class until everybody learnt it. We prepared side dish, soup, second dish and some dessert if we had enough time. We brought the ingredients, we cooked and ate it. And of course we wrote the recipes down. We brought a plenty of recipes and our teacher 'doamna Cimpeanu' [Mrs. Cimpeanu] was a very good housekeeper. For example she taught us to prepare egg-plants [vinete in Romanian] - I think that she was the first in Varad who heard about the vinete. They brought it to Transylvania from the Regat. She prepared roe, so she always liked very much the specialities. She was an excellent teacher. We learnt needlework and embroidery as well. That's why my hobby is the embroidering. We learnt to embroid, to use the sewing machine and everything else. We sewed knickers, slips and nightdresses with the sewing machine. For example, in the last grade of the middle school, we had to sew a Romanian folk blouse called 'ije' which was embroidered. [Editor's note: the Romanian spelling is 'ie', and is a sewed or embroidered women's shirt a part of the Romanian national dress]. I know all kind of needlework and embroidery.