

Zuzanna Mensz' Cousins Zosia Perec, Hania Rottenberg And Other Children From Rottenberg Family



This is a group of my cousins from Rottenberg family. It was taken during summer holidays in Skryhiczyn in late 1920s. A little girl standing first from right is Zosia, Zofia Perec, my mom's sister Chana's daughter and my best friend. At the top, second from right is Hania Lanota, nee Rottenberg, also my cousin.

A whole bunch of kids used to come to Skryhiczyn every summer, an awful lot of people, and all of them family. Skryhiczyn is our legend, our happy childhood. We had this game, it went on and on. It was called The Kingdom of Fun. The idea was of course Ida Merzan's [née Halperin, daughter of Masza, 1907-1987, educationist and writer, associate of Janusz Korczak]. We had a Queen, it was always Sara, Ida's sister, the most beautiful of the girls, we made a bulletin, flags. It went on for years. In this photo you can see our bulletin and our flag.

We used to go swimming in the Bug river, three kilometers from the Farm, and visit the uncles at the Manor on our way back, they would give us treats and we would go back to the Farm. We often worked in the fields, helping harvesting or threshing. The harvest was still done with scythes. We tied the sheaves and carried them over to the barn. There was a treadmill in the barn and we tossed the sheaves into the threshing machine. We helped our tenant farmers that way, although it was not our duty. When there was some work to do, we did it with pleasure.

Zosia Perec lived in Czestochowa, but we always used to spent the summer holidays in Skryhiczyn with her and her brother Mietek. You might say we were raised together, we were like brothers and sisters. I remember my sister Zlatka playing piano duet with Mietek, they were both very musically gifted. When my mom built a house in Skryhiczyn, Aunt Hanka Perec came to visit us and she liked the place, and added one more room with a balcony and a large kitchen. In 1939 Aunt Chana and Uncle Aron left all their belongings in Czestochowa and fled to Volodymir-Volyns'kyy. They later enrolled for going to up-country Russia. Zoska finished school there, she became an English teacher. After the war Zosia stayed in Russia, because she got married there. Later she emigrated to United States. She died a few weeks ago.

Hania Lanota was the first close relative from my family who I met after the war in Lublin. She escaped from outside Warsaw with Jadzia Koszutska. They were two heroes in Lublin, veterans of the Warsaw Uprising. They were both terribly gaunt, unbelievably, and Hania was pregnant. She moved later to Warsaw, where she still lives.