

Ladislav Roth With His Mother Hermina Roth, Brother Stepan Roth, Sister Ella Baksa



My mother Hermina Roth (nee Rosenberg). Standing beside her is my sister Ella and sitting from her left is my brother Stepan. I am standing on the right. This photo was taken in Uzhgorod in 1928. My mother took us to get photographed to send this photo to her parents in Satu Mare, Romania so that they could see their grandchildren and one duplicate stayed with our family and preserved by miracle in our house through World War II.

My mother Hermina was born in Satu Mare in 1896. My mother received Jewish education. She had classes with a visiting teacher, and could read and write in Yiddish and knew prayers. My mother finished 8 grades in a school for girls. I am not sure, perhaps, it was a Hungarian or German school. My grandmother and grandfather died when my mother was in their teens. When my mother turned 18 she decided to move to Uzhhorod. My mother parents' distant relatives lived there and they promised to help her. [In 1914 when she was 18 both towns were still Austro-Hungarian, so she did not go abroad. She merely moved to her relatives about 100 km away to another town of Eastern Hungary.] Here my mother met my future father, but I don't know any details. All I know is that in 1920 they had a traditional Jewish wedding with a rabbi and a chuppah.

After the wedding my parents bought an apartment in a 2-storied house in Sobranetskaya Street on the outskirts of Uzhhorod. This street ended where the farmlands of a neighboring village began. Our apartment was on the first floor on the right. There were two rooms, a kitchen, a closet and a bathroom. There was an orchard in a big yard and tenants of each of four apartments in this house had their plot of land in the garden.

By the time he got married my father worked as senior waiter in Bercsenyi restaurant. My mother was a housewife after she got married. We were wealthy. This lasted until the early 1940s. I was the first baby and was born in 1922. I have the name of Ladislav in my Czech birth certificate, my Jewish name is Laizer. My sister Ella was born in 1924 and my brother Stepan was born in 1926. At home my brother was called Pista in the Hungarian manner. [Pista is the diminutive of Istvan, that is Stepan in Slovak or Czech] I don't know my sister's or brother's Jewish names. My brother and I were circumcised in accordance with Jewish traditions.

We spoke Hungarian at home. There were Slovak, Czech, Romanian, Jewish, German and Hungarian schools in Uzhhorod. My parents sent me and then my younger brother to a Slovak school. My sister went to a Czech school in the center of the town. The Slovak school was near our house, so I guess, that was why we were sent there. Perhaps, there were other reasons. Probably my parents thought of educating their children in the state language. There was no segregation of schoolchildren to Jews or non-Jews.

I studied in a primary school and a cheder. Cheder was in the center of the town. We had to pay for the cheder. There were 15-20 children in each class. In the first grade we studied Hebrew letters and then we learned to read. We could read a little in the second grade. We read with Yiddish translations. Later we read the Torah and the Talmud and discussed what we had read. Each of us had to prepare a report on an article from the Torah that we were learning at the moment. We went to school in the morning and then I went home for lunch and after lunch I went to cheder where our classes started at 2 p.m. We didn't have classes in cheder on Saturday. There were classes at school on Saturday. When there was a Jewish holidays on Saturday, Jewish children were allowed to stay home from school. I studied in cheder for 3 years and then I stopped going there. I can't remember why.