

Matilda Cerge And Others With Father Andrej Tumpej



Here I am after the war with Father Andrej Tumpej, the priest who saved us. He wanted to take a picture with us and we agreed. This was after the war. I knew some of the other young people pictured here and some we didn't know. It is nice to have this picture of him.

He gave my sister and I fake documents, a place to live and enrolled us in school. He was an exceptional man. He hid two other Jewish girls. Up in Banovo Brdo there was a German cemetery. This was in 1942. During the day they hid in the cemetery and at night they came to him. He gave them a place to sleep in one big hall so that they wouldn't freeze. Imagine this, then he, he had good relations with the Serbian priests, and through them got these two papers that they were Serbian women going to work in Germany. With this, I think, he thought he helped save them. He obtained all that for them. When they got to the train station as two Serbian women to go work in Germany a Volksdeutscher recognized them and turned them in. They were arrested and transported. We never saw them again and I don't know their names. He told us this during the war. After this the Germans locked him up for one, two, three months in Belgrade.

He also hid Dr. Vajs, a pediatrician. She was with the partisans. She also came to him and slept in the big hall. He helped everyone a lot. He died after the war but I don't remember what year. When he was in prison a German asked him 'How could you dare to do this, to hide Jewish girls?' and he answered 'And tomorrow if you were in that kind of situation I would do the same for you.' He was a great man and he got along very well with the Serbian priests too. They hugged and kissed when they met each other. There was no hatred. He was a man in the true sense of the word. Exceptional.