

Jiri Franek And His Brother Frantisek



This photo is of my brother Frantisek and me. I'm guessing that I was about two and Frantisek three.

We're both dressed as soccer players, for a children's masquerade parade in Vysoke Myto. In our hands we're holding chocolate soccer balls wrapped in aluminium wrap.

We never had a nanny in the proper sense of the word, but our family servant Marie Polakova, who we called Mary, had an enormous influence on our upbringing.

She lived in our family her entire life and also helped out in my mother's siblings' households. She became a part of the family. She brought up loads of children, who except for me all died in the Holocaust.

Marie lived with us, in the kitchen. She became such a part of our family that she never had any boyfriend, never married, which really, from her viewpoint, was a tragedy.

When my father died, my mother had financial problems, she needed money for the household and for the business.

She had to borrow money, the poor woman didn't suspect that in the end the Germans would take it all from us anyways.

Mary had some savings, so she lent us 30 thousand, which was an enormous sum in those days. When I returned after the war, as the only family member left, Mary acted very offended. I had no idea why.

Later, when she sensed that she would soon die, she wrote me that she was very annoyed that I acted in such a way, that I undoubtedly have money and that I refuse to return it to her.

I set out to go see her, her house was near Vysoke Myto, and there it came out that my mother had paid off the debt before the war, but she had given it to Mary's sister.

Of course her sister hadn't given her anything and kept it all, because they had had a falling out. So I promised her, that although I was studying and had no money, that I'll get some from somewhere and pay the debt off.

After all, by then that thirty thousand was worth much less than when she had lent it to us. I paid it to her and she was all overjoyed that it hadn't been us, but her sister who had betrayed her. It was easier for her to accept her sister's betrayal.

Shortly after it was all explained, she broke her leg and had to go to the hospital. There they told her that at her age her situation was hopeless, that she would soon die. I wrote her that I and my wife were coming to visit her.

My wife bathed her and brushed her hair, Mary was overjoyed to see us, and right after our visit she died. I think that she was holding on to life so that she could see me again. So in the end we made peace.