

Josef Hen With His Family



This picture was taken in 1927 in our villa, called Kronowka.

I don't know who took this photo. As most of our family shots, this one was probably saved thanks to Chawa, my father's sister, who had left to Argentina.

In the second row from the left we can see my mother, Chawa Cukier, my father, Rubin Cukier, and a woman, who is probably not a member of our family.

In the first row from the left we can see my sister Stella Boren (nee Cukier), me, my brother Hipek Cukier and my sister Mirka Toronczyk (nee Cukier).

My older sister, Sara, who called herself Stella, was born in 1915. She got her secondary school certificate from Dicksteinowa's gymnasium.

The school was located on Leszno Street. Emanuel Ringelblum taught history there, he was well liked by the students. I used to copy Stella's cheat sheets for her, but because I didn't like these essays, I used to correct them.

Stella was a beautiful girl, she was popular with boys. She always chose tall athletic boys. One of them was a hockey player in the Maccabi team in Warsaw, an extremely handsome man.

I was born on the night of 7th November 1923. I was the youngest in my family. The people who visited us, especially Poles, called me 'beniaminek' [the youngest, favorite son].

I attended schools for Jewish youth. I started going to the 1st grade of public school when I was six years old. It was Krelman's school, the classes were taught in Polish.

My brother Hipek, that is Mojzesz, also called Moniek for short, was born in 1920. He was three years older than me. He was involved with the communist youth.

He was a drawing-room communist, he had some brochures at home. He couldn't exist among these rebellious young people as Moniek, so he called himself Hipek. Everyone agreed to that, Father and Mother too.

My second sister was called Miriam, or Mirka. She was born in 1917. She completed seven grades of public school. She was black-eyed, white-teethed, beautiful, clever, tactful and well-read. Before the war she worked as a secretary for Father.

She kept tabs on the money, she wrote out the invoices. Father trusted her immensely, because she was meticulous, very honest and kind.

She would sometimes give me some money for going to the cinema. She wrote out the pay list and the workers called her 'boss.'