

Augusta Kovanicova



This picture of my mother Augusta Kovanicova, nee Spitzova was taken in Prague in 1941 by the brother of Frantisek Kowanitz, the husband of my sister Gertruda Kowanitzova, nee Kovanicova.

My mother was born in 1894 in Prague. She went to a German-language school, but not out of conviction, it's just that there weren't Czech schools everywhere.

She spoke Czech with my grandmother but wasn't too confident about her written Czech. She had a compulsory education. Mum made friends with my dad's sister Elza and it was through her that she met him. Elza was actually my mother's best friend.

Dad often used to say how they had been together at some gathering and that he accompanied all the girls home but took Mum home only at the end, because he liked her.

Even back then, when I was little, I used to ask myself why he didn't take her home first if he liked her. They had a Jewish wedding and were married by Rabbi Reach.

My mother wasn't as religious as my father. She took the Jewish religion more as a historical tradition. She was a housewife; she did all the sewing for us and, whenever necessary, helped out my grandmother in the store.

Mum was a very small lady. Once, when I was sick, she went to the school to ask what they were learning about at the moment. My teacher later said to me, 'Anicka, that small dark-haired lady that was here, was that your mum?'

I said, 'No, my mum is tall.' But she was actually smaller than me - she just seemed tall to me at the time. At the age of 14 I was already taller than she was.

In May 1944 I was placed with my parents to be transported again. We were put along with fifty people in one cattle-truck with two buckets of water and some bread. I don't remember how long the way to Auschwitz was.

In Auschwitz most of us didn't work because we were in the family camp. We saw smoke from the crematorium and knew what it meant. Mum's hearing wasn't very good, which protected her quite a bit from the nerve-racking situations that the others went through.

She didn't hear the screams and wails, the barking of dogs, the cries and groans of the people around us. The toil began only in the other camps.

A selection was carried out in June 1944 and I was separated from my parents, who stayed behind.