

Gertruda Kowanitzova



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

My sister was seven years older than me. I think she went to a Czech high school and then to a private school of advertising. She then got a job in an office somewhere and drew for fashion magazines, from which she earned a living on the side.

She was very clever and good with her hands. She could speak French and German and was really smart and beautiful. She could also play the piano, even though we didn't have one. We liked each other a lot, but we only realized this during the war, when it was too late for everything.

In October 1941, my sister married the Jewish man Frantisek Kowanitz in Vinohrady Town Hall.

Frantisek was born in 1916; he was a distant relative. He was really good-looking and clever. He was a fine person. But we didn't know each other too well.

My sister and me didn't understand each other too well either, on account of the big age difference between us. By the time we had started to see eye-to-eye, we were in Terezin.

They obviously got married quickly because deportations were already taking place at that time and they wanted to go together.

Immediately after the wedding, Frantisek was sent to a work camp [forced labor camp] in Lipa and then to Terezin. My sister went to Terezin in December 1941.

In Terezin Frantisek was in the disciplinary service; I don't know what my sister did. At first, my sister lived apart from her husband, but they later built a kind of closet out of wood-wool slabs in the attic of a house, and there they lived, which was a big advantage.

Those who went on the first transports to Terezin had certain privileges. They lived with their daughter, Jana Ivana, who was born in Terezin in June 1943. We called her Honzulka.

My sister's friend was on one of the last transports to go through camp Christianstadt where I was prisoned, and her friend told me that my sister had gone with her little girl on the last transport from Terezin in October 1944 straight to the gas chambers at Auschwitz. Her husband died in 1945, somewhere on the death march. He had phlegmon in the leg.