

Bernard Knezo Schönbrun On The Steps Of The High School In Michalovce



This photograph shows me with my friends on the steps of the high school in Michalovce. It was taken in the 1930s. The first on the left is Tibor Horvath, the second is Karol Hexner, who we called Karci, and I'm the third. I don't recognize the boy sitting behind us anymore. Karci hid in Bratislava during the Holocaust, where a certain woman betrayed him. Allegedly the Germans then threw him, alive, into some cement. I stress the word allegedly, as I heard this from someone, and don't have it confirmed from direct sources. I began attending school in Inacovce. There I attended up to Grade 3. At that point I transferred to school in Michalovce. The religion teacher there was 'Uncle' Hellinger. He always walked around in a Sabbath overcoat. He didn't know how to express himself properly in any other language, which is why he spoke Yiddish and Zemplin. He convinced my mother to put me into high school, that he would prepare me for German exams. I guess he prepared me well, as I passed the exam and transferred from council school, where I absolved only one grade, to high school. I liked gym a lot, as I was excellent in it. I was a good athlete, running, high jump, shot put, that went well for me. I also used to play soccer. I took sports seriously. I liked it a lot, it seems that our second-born daughter has taken after me in this. At the same time, I also very much liked to draw. I excelled at it. When we went outside as a class to draw, my teacher told me, 'All right, you'll sit down here and you'll draw this scene.' This flattered me. What young person wouldn't be flattered by this? People saw that I was drawing something different from the others. This teacher, who was named Müller, he was a Czech, also gave me advice regarding my future

profession and my future in general. I went to him for advice. I was considering going to an academy, where we'd be taking drawing. He told me, 'No, I wouldn't recommend it, as there'll be times when you'll have lots to eat, and times when you won't have anything to eat.' I was also good at natural history. Otherwise, it can't be said that I lagged in something, I was this better average. I didn't lag in anything, but neither did I excel. To this day I've got all my report cards filed away.