

The Koltai Family



This is a family picture. The photo must have been taken after my son Karcsi Koltai (on the left) graduated from secondary school, so it must be from 1964. I'm in the middle and my husband, Istvan Koltai is on the right. Karcsi went to school close to us, to the Istvan Gymnasium [one of the top high schools of Budapest, especially strong in mathematics]. And he went on to the Technical University. My son isn't circumcised. Because my husband said no, although his family had been very religious [in his childhood]. We didn't hide it that we were Jewish. This simply couldn't be a secret in our family. I'm sure that Karcsi heard anti-Semitic remarks at school and was surprised at them. But we didn't feel it in his behavior. We didn't observe Jewish holidays, but we didn't have a Christmas tree either. Karcsi didn't miss it, either, he never asked us to have one. I always went to the synagogue on high holidays. This wasn't a problem. I think they must have known about it [at the trade union]. But I'm not sure. I don't know about us having to be afraid because of this. When I could, I would take along Karcsi. Pista never came. Karcsi is interested in the Jewish religion but not as much as his children. They went much farther than their parents. Karcsi doesn't go to the synagogue. Karcsi's circle of friends is not so mixed. His friends are mostly Jewish. His wife Eva is also Jewish. It did matter to me but I told him that I would accept whoever he chose. Because I had lived in a world where it mattered and I was more attached to these things than Karcsi. Because Karcsi was born into a world where he could be like this or like that, whatever he chose. Eva is a very clever woman, a nice, smart woman. They are the same age. Eva is a chemical engineer by profession but she works in foreign trade.