

Panni Koltai With Her Mother



This is me (on the left) with my Mom, Aranka Friedmann, nee Pollak, in the open-air swimming pool in Eger in 1936. There was a swimming pool in Eger. It was unthinkable that someone couldn't swim; we all knew how to swim. I learnt to swim at the age of 3; I was taught by a swimming instructor. Mom was standing next to me and was having kittens that I would be thrown off from the spring-board and would drown. And the instructor took me up the spring-board, threw me off and that's how I learnt to swim. We loved the swimming pool, we used to go there the whole

summer. We went there in the morning and waited in the courtyard of the swimming pool until it was opened. When it was opened, we ran in like a bunch of puppies and we got into the water and out and in again - it went on like this the whole day. We didn't have any food because we didn't take lunch with us, but we had fruit because Mom always bought a whole basket of fruit and distributed it among the children in the morning. They didn't have to worry about us, we had a great time and Mom was free, too. We, children, simply loved the swimming pool. My parents also went to the swimming pool occasionally, my mother swam very well. Dad didn't go swimming, he worked. But Mom used to go regularly. We used to go to the swimming pool with Jewish girls. At that time men and women bathed separately. The Catholic Church didn't allow a common swimming pool - we children knew about this, too, it was no secret. It was a 'sin' for men and women to swim or bathe together. This is especially interesting because the canons - these were priests with purple belts - refrained from going to such public places [in Eger]. At the same time many people saw them in Pest going to swimming pools and the lido. Well, this was really not reconcilable [with their position] and even we children reprimanded them for this, although it was none of our business. When the [common] open-air swimming pool was finally allowed, Eger started to prosper because it gave a boost to the town. Eger became a busy town; cheap trains started to come from Pest. People could take cheap trains to come to the open-air swimming pool in Eger.