

Danuta Mniewska With Her Mother Ewa Mniewska On Holidays



This is a picture of my mother, Ewa Mniewska (nee Ryza), and me. It was taken during our stay in Busko Zdroj [health resort some 160 km from Lodz] in 1935 or 1936. I think that photo was taken by a professional photographer. I remember one summer, in 1935 or 1936, I spent with my mother in Busko Zdroj. I went there with my mother only, as her chaperone, so that she always had someone to accompany her. We lived in a boarding house. One night I woke up and my mother wasn't there. I burst into tears - where is Mama, where is Mama?! My mother, it turned out, had gone to a dance but told the woman next door to come to me if I woke up. I remember that because it was a terrible experience. My mother was lovely. Lively, cheerful, liked by everyone, very vigorous, and she liked to work. She ran a colonial store, a grocery. It was a single room, on the first floor, in the same house on 1 Maja Street where we lived. The servant, Regina, helped her. My mother loved to party, she went to dance with her friends to the Tabarin. It was a dancehall at Narutowicza Street, in fact, it was still there for many years after the war. My mother had a

wonderful voice, so much so that when some guy once heard her at some charity ball, he approached her and said he would pay for her education, that he would take her to Vienna so that she could study at the conservatory there. But she was a married woman and my father said no. She wasted such a wonderful, strong voice - a soprano. She sang Polish and Ruthenian songs at home, I don't remember precisely what. She had very many virtues, but as far as the intellectual ones go, she had none - to read a book, or even an article in a newspaper? At the age of six I went to elementary school, at Zeromskiego Street. After a couple of days they moved me to second grade because I could already read and write well. I hadn't studied before, but I could. And that ultimately proved my misfortune, that destroyed me, that ease - because I didn't feel like studying at all. I went there for two years, I think. When I was to go to fourth grade, my parents moved me to the school where my sister went - at the corner of Zielona and Zakatna Street, which was later renamed to Pogonowskiego. There were some 40 of us in the class, only girls, only Jews. It was a Polish-language school, the only difference being that we didn't go to school on Saturdays but instead on Sundays. My sister and I went to a ballet school. Actually, ballet school is too serious a word; the place had no official qualifications. It was called the School of Dance and Arts. The classes took place in a rented room somewhere, I don't remember where. I was eight or nine years old at the time. My sister was good at it and I wasn't. From time to time a show was staged for the girls to demonstrate what they had learned, the parents were happy that they had such talented children -everything was alright.