

## Ludmila Rutarova In Her Apartment



This picture of me was taken in Prague in 2007. When my children were small, I decided to have the number tattooed on my forearm removed. Circumstances forced me into it. I used to often take the train to our cottage with my children. In the summer, when I'd be wearing a short-sleeved dress, I'd often notice people looking at my forearm, and then whisper amongst each other. It used to happen that they'd turn to me and begin to feel terribly sorry for me, and keep repeating what a poor thing I was, how I must have suffered during the war. I don't want anyone's pity. And it definitely wasn't at all pleasant for someone to tell me what a poor wretch I must be. So I decided that I'd go to the doctor and have the number removed. I arrived at the dermatology ward, and the lady doctor asked me what was ailing me. I told her that I'd like to have a tattoo removed. She looked at me with an annoyed expression and began berating me: "And why did you get a tattoo in the first place? You could have realized that one day you'll change your mind, and now all you're doing is making more work for me!?" So I told her that I hadn't exactly been overly enthused about getting this tattoo, and if I'd have had a choice, I would definitely have not let them give me a

tattoo. Then I rolled up my sleeve. The doctor immediately did an about-turn and began to apologize profusely; the poor thing had had no idea of what sort of tattoo it was. After the war I was in Auschwitz with my son to have a look; there are only chimneys left behind. I wanted to show my son camp BIIb, where I'd lived. I showed him the latrines, and told him that I had to throw away a diamond brooch into them. My father had given it to me back then, so that I'd have something with me for the trip to Hamburg to work as a keepsake. I'd have had to give it away to the Germans, which I definitely didn't want to do, so I preferred to throw it away into the latrine, rather than have the Nazis end up with it! Since the war I've been in Auschwitz only once. Occasionally I participated in Holocaust remembrances, and to this day I attend events put on by the Terezin Initiative.