

The Synagogue Of Wiener Neustadt Before Its Destruction In Kristallnacht 1938



This is a picture of the synagogue of Wiener Neustadt, taken long before it was destroyed during the pogrom of Kristallnacht 1938.

My parents, Wilhelm and Johanna Schischa [nee Friedmann] used to go to the synagogue on high holidays such as Pesach, Rosh Ha Shanah and Yom Kippur. We, children, were awfully bored and played in the courtyard in the meantime.

I didn't experience any anti-Semitism until 12th March 1938. I was supposed to go back to school in September but I wasn't allowed to go to the regular grammar school any more. The Jewish community in Wiener Neustadt continued to exist a bit longer, and a school was set up in the praying house, which was close to the big, beautiful synagogue.

We had a Jewish teacher and about 20 to 30 children from Wiener Neustadt and surroundings came to the praying house and studied in the same classroom. It wasn't a regular school but at least we had the opportunity to study. I remember 10th November 1938 [Kristallnacht] very well. It was a Thursday, the sky was cloudy and it was about 10am when someone came into the classroom and started whispering into our teacher's ear. Afterwards the teacher told us to go home, saying that something was going on. My parents were surprised that I returned from school so early. At about 11am the doorbell rang and the Gestapo arrested my father. They took him along with them.

They took us to the synagogue. All Jewish women and children from Wiener Neustadt had been brought there and were searched for money and jewelry. They had to hand in everything; the SA deprived them of all their belongings.

Mrs. Gerstl, my friend Trude's mother, didn't want to sign a paper saying that she would hand over her house, so they beat her until she did sign it. I witnessed all of this. When night was falling they led us into the synagogue. The floors were covered with hay, and they gave us Torah blankets to cover ourselves up. We were locked in for three days. The synagogue had a yard with an iron gate

facing the street. There were people outside the gate watching, and people from Wiener Neustadt looked on with amusement as we, Jewish children, had to go round in circles.