

Lilli Tauber's Grandmother, Sofie Friedmann, And Her Aunt, Berta Guenser, In Prein



This is a picture of my maternal grandmother, Sofie Friedmann [nee Daniel], and my aunt, Berta Ohme [nee Friedmann]. The photo was taken in Prein in the 1930s, and you can see our house in the background. My aunt Berta is the only one of my mother Johanna Schischa's siblings who survived the Holocaust.

My grandparents had six children: My mother, Johanna, Isidor, Julius, Fany, Berta and a son, who died of typhoid, I think at the age of 14. I don't remember his name.

Aunt Berta Friedmann was born in Prein in 1898. She married Roland Ohme. They didn't have any children. They lived in Styria in the beginning. One of Aunt Adele's daughters owned a clothes factory there where they produced blankets and things like that. Aunt Berta's husband worked as an electrician in the factory. Later they moved to Vienna, and he started to work with Siemens. Uncle Roland wasn't Jewish and after the German invasion, he was advised to divorce Berta. He stayed with her, and that's how Aunt Berta managed to survive the war. She lived in Vienna, didn't have to wear a yellow star but had to do some kind of forced labor.

Aunt Berta had a non-Jewish friend from her school years called Obermeier. She kept in touch with her throughout the years, and one day, after the war, her friend wrote to her that she should come home quickly because our house and the shop were empty after the person who had aryanized it fled. Aunt Berta went to Prein and took over the house and shop. She was often on business in Vienna, rented a room there for that reason, and picked me up at the railway station when I returned from England. Vienna was in a horrible state in October 1946. There was no food, no electricity and nothing else to buy. When I arrived and saw how miserable it was, Aunt Berta, who didn't have any children of her own said, 'You come with me to Prein right now and help me out in the shop.' And that's what happened. Prein was a second home to me; the atmosphere was comfortable and warm.

Uncle Roland, Aunt Berta's husband, became a self-employed electrician. The marriage didn't work out, and they got divorced but remained friends. Aunt Berta got married again a few years later. Her second husband, Wilhem Guenser was Jewish and had been interned in Kazakhstan during the war. He owned a poulterer's shop in Vienna, and she moved to live with him in Vienna. Aunt Berta died in 1985.