

Eva Vari With Her Family



This is a family photo from 1955 or 56. It was taken in Budapest. I like this photo especially because my parents are still on it. I am first from left, next to me is my husband Pal Vari. Next to him are my parents Laszlo and Margit Ladanyi. And in front of us are my three children, Zsuzsa in the middle and the twins, Judit and Agnes on the two sides.

I was twenty and he was forty. But he was very handsome, a fine figure of a man, and very gentle. My parents wanted nothing to do with it. They always said that he was too old. I had as many suitors as stars in the sky. The Jewish boys, who survived, came home with nothing, no families left. I was a striking girl. I could have had another, but I wanted this one, I wanted a calm, balanced life after the deportations. If I remember we got married that December. We had a Jewish wedding, because as his wife's body had not been found we couldn't have a civil one. And then the civil ceremony took place a year later. I would have liked children from the start but for a year I did not get pregnant. When I was pregnant with Zsuzsika I didn't work. The twins were born in 1950.

The girls were not brought up religious, not only because I was not religious but because it was always a principle of mine not to bring children up in two ways. And when they started to go to school then religion was not at issue - which I believe is quite right. Their first encounter with Jewishness was in Miskolc. There was an inner yard where we lived and one of the neighbor's siblings had a little girl who was the same age as mine, they played together. One day Zsuzsika rushed in crying that what's-her-name she said I'm Jewish. Is that why you're crying, I asked. Well, she thought it was a terrible insult. And then I explained that 'you are a Jew, so is your mother and your father, being Jewish is a religion, but this does not concern us, one man is very like another so don't cry, it's not an insult. If they say you are a Jew, then be proud say yes, I am a Jew'. And then I went to see the neighbor and told them to drop the subject, because perhaps they didn't know it, but this type of prejudice against the community entails punishment. And that the child did not make it up herself but heard it at home.

We always had Christmas. There was always a tree up to the ceiling. In my childhood we didn't have one at home. I don't think we could have afforded it. But for Zsuzsika and all the children there was a Christmas tree. Zsuzsika had some things which Gyuri (her husband) tolerated with difficulty.

After 12 years of marriage we split up on 5 September 1957. After much discussion we agreed that he would give me 1,000 forints a month for the three children. I definitely wanted to move from Miskolc. I didn't like it. It is a typical small town. Here was an estate agent in town and I said if they found an apartment exchange in Pest to let me know. Our apartment was nice and in a good place. And they telephoned and said there is someone who would like to swap apartments urgently for a Miskolc one. A young woman came, she loved the apartment and we signed the papers. I said I would like to see what I'm getting. My father came with me. And we came up and I really didn't like it. The Miskolc one had big French windows and double doors, everything there was small. And (my father) said: "Now listen, this isn't a bad apartment. You will never have another chance to swap for free. No matter that your apartment is lovely, the provinces are the provinces and Pest is Pest". I let myself be convinced.