

Judit Kinszki's Grandmother Hermina Gardonyi



My maternal grandmother, Hermina Brauner. They came from the Felvidek region in [in what was then Upper Northern Hungary, today Slovakia], but we didn't know too much about them.

They had eleven children, all of whom were born in Budapest. The first two children died immediately after birth, because, as my mother put it, my grandmother must still have been very young, and her womb would have been underdeveloped. Then nine more children came.

My mother's family lived in a very poor neighbourhood in Bethlen Square. My mother told me that in spite of this fact, my grandmother and grandfather used to go to the Kiraly Theatre to see an operetta or something, and when my grandmother came home, she sang to the children what she had heard in the theatre. But it happened for example that my mother didn't want to do gymnastics in PT class because she had no panties, and she was afraid that if she had to do a somersault, her behind would be visible, and they failed her for this reason. She went home crying, and grandmother made her panties. She had no time for sewing for the children, because she had to work for a living. She sewed for other people.

They used to light candles on Fridays at my grandmother's place -I still have her candlesticks, and I found out that they were candlesticks for travelling, so she probably took these to Karlsbad. There was a synagogue on Bethlen Gabor Square, but you had to pay for your place there. The boys went there on Fridays but the girls didn't, because they couldn't pay for so many people, but my grandmother went anyway. There was no such thing as kashrut. The family observed every feast. My grandmother used to love reading and going to the theatre. She became a big patriot as well, and she used to read nothing but Hungarian historical novels. And she named her daughters after characters in the novels she read.

The place on Bethlen Gabor Square was kind of family nest. Everybody lived in the same house. Grandmother lived in a three-room flat with Imre and Lajos, the two bachelors. One room there was used as a consulting-room for Imre. Sanyi also lived in that house; he lived next door, and Erzsi lived above him; and in the other yard of the same house lived Aranka. So only we, Gyongyi and Jeno's family didn't live there. Everyone gathered frequently at grandmother's. There was a table, I remember that there were many people around it. Grandmother was a "uniting force". She died in '43.