

Emilia Leibel With Her Friend Zosia Tygner On Vacation In Zakopane



This picture was taken in February 1939 in Zakopane. I was skiing with Zosia Tygner, a friend from Cracow. She is the one in the white hat.

In the winter we would go skiing in Zakopane. My husband Julek skied better than me, because I only learned to ski with him. Before my wedding I hadn't been able to afford skis. Skis and boots cost money. I had my own gear, but bought by my husband. I used to go skiing with Zosia Tygner too - they had this big hide store in Cracow on Grodzka Street. We were kind of friendly through my friend Renia Seelerfreund, because Zosia was her aunt.

Julek's grandparents and my in-laws lived in Kalwaria, in a house across the square from us, at right angles. My in-laws came from Kalwaria, but they'd later moved to Wadowice [approx. 40 km from Cracow]. My husband was born in Wadowice and had even been at high school back in Wadowice - the same high school that the Pope [John Paul II] went to. I don't know why they moved back to Kalwaria. I got on very well with my mother-in-law, and my father-in-law was very fond of me. He was no longer working, but they were all still taken up with the leather business. Wouldn't I have preferred to stay in Cracow? If he had business there, I went there to be with him. I'd have gone to hell to be with him, not just to Kalwaria. I was madly in love. What my husband's firm was called? It wasn't called anything - there was just a wagon full of goods, off it went, and that was it. Abroad. I don't know exactly where those wagons went.

When I got married, our maid from Czarnieckiego Street went with me to Kalwaria, but she lasted it a few months and then left. Said she was bored. There were 3 or so people from the village working for my husband, so the daughter of one of them came - and shortly afterwards got married. And after that I had local maids - they were very easy to hire. The working conditions were good at our house: there were 2 rooms, one child, good pay, board, the washerwoman came to take the linen - the maid wasn't overworked. She used to go with me and Halinka for walks - a little further up the hill there was a place where you could go for walks, because further on, to the [Bernadine] monastery, you couldn't go, because Jews were not allowed in. So we had to turn back before the monastery. On the whole we cooked kosher food, which wasn't to say that we didn't buy ham, but we had kosher crockery so that my father could eat with us when he came to visit.

My husband had a Tatra, a Czech car, he'd had it since 1926 or 1928, I think. He only bought a Mercedes right before the war, in 1939. First he taught me to drive himself, and then later, when there was this automobile course in Kalwaria, he invited 2 examiners round, and told them I wanted to take the exam, that I hadn't been on a course, but he'd taught me everything himself. There were 2 examiners, my husband sat in on it as well, and I drove the car. There wasn't any traffic as such in Kalwaria, but this beggar, this invalid, an old man, happened to be crossing the road, and I swore, something vulgar, like: 'Darn, goddammit! He had to go and get in my way!' And the examiner found that very funny: 'Well, now you're a real driver!' No, my husband wasn't afraid to give me the car... My husband would have given me anything. He was a wonderful man, a very good son, husband and father. His mother worshipped him. And my parents, no question - obviously.