

Wacek Kornblum's Father Szlomo Kornblum With His Brother Mosze



This is my father, Szlomo Kornblum and his older brother Mosze in Paris. This photograph must have been made in early 1920s.

Father, Szlomo Kornblum, born in 1894, was a writer, he used to write in Jewish.

Father's family was a large family, where several generations came from Powazki near Warsaw. I only vaguely remember Father's mother, her name was Miriam. I don't know what year she was born in, I don't know what year she died. Father's father's name was Icchak, I have my name after him. I don't remember him. He must have died fairly early. Father's parents must have been religious, whereas all Father's sisters and Father were not.

He went to a cheder for certain, but what school he went to afterwards, I don't know. I don't think he took high school exams. I remember when Dad used to sit and write, I remember his handwriting. He wrote by hand, very specific handwriting, so that where there were long Nun, Chet at the end of a word, there was a thick line. And he wrote on sheets of lined paper, but folded in half in such a way that there were thin stripes of paper.

Dad was a writer and he wrote a few books. It's not big literature, but it's prose with a large poetic load, so descriptions, accounts of events. He also used to write to Jewish magazines, to Folkshtime, to the newspaper Haynt, to the newspaper Radio, that was an afternoon newspaper, and to the newspaper Moment. He belonged to a Union of Jewish Writers in Warsaw, on 13 Tlomackie Street, where he used to take me to as a child, where Itzik Manger also used to come.

When he was in Paris, he learnt how to make women's handbags. He was very good at it, he used to come up with styles himself. He had a shop that throughout various periods of life was located either in our house or in some rented apartment.

I don't know much about my biological mother. In Father's first book, published in 1921, there is a dedication: "Dedicated to you Menuchele", so he knew her in 1921 already. [My parents] got married probably in 1921. Since I was born in 1926, I suspect they spent those few years in Warsaw and then went to Paris, where the family of my uncle, Father's brother, was living. They went there to work, because they had a place to stay there. I know that Mom died in Paris. I know she died of tuberculosis. I know that after Mom died Father gave me, a few-month-old baby, to the nuns, to some convent in Strasburg, apparently there was no one to take care of me, and probably after about half a year Father took me back and brought to Warsaw. All these memories are based on unfinished allusions, by Mom's sister, Aunt Mania Zamosc from Mszczonow, who lived in Warsaw. Some time around 1929 Dad got married the second time, to Lonia Mileband and I used to call her my mom.

Father's older brother, Mosze, went to Paris at the beginning of the 1920s, along with his wife, who had a family there. And later they went to the United States from Paris. I don't know when he was born, but he was about four years older than my father. Uncle married a Jewish woman from Warsaw. I don't remember her name, they had three daughters. One of them, Suzi, committed suicide in Washington after the war, as a very young woman. The other two, Lilian and Madeleine, lived until not long ago, one died maybe half a year ago when she was 90 something years old, the other, who we keep in touch with from time to time, is still alive.

In the ghetto, when my parents realized we would most likely be separated Dad wrote down the address of his brother in America and I put the piece of paper with this address on it into my wallet that Dad made for me.