

Wacek Kornblum With His Aunt Chawcia And Her Family



This is me and the family of my aunt Chawcia Kornblum nee Kornblum, too. She's sitting on a bench with her husband, Benjamin Kornblum. Behind them are standing their son Kuba, my best friend, myself and Izaak, their son, too. He's wearing a uniform of military classes. He was drafted already then, but not to the army - all the high school students of the higher grades had some kind of military course

Father had a couple of sisters and a brother. The youngest sister, Father's favorite who he used to always help, was Aunt Chawcia, that is Chawa. Her husband Benjamin was also a Kornblum, he was Father's cousin. He had a sister in Israel, Sara Hermelin.

They had two sons. One was Icchak, the other one Kuba Akiwa. Icchak was three-four years older than me, and Kuba was my age, my best friend who kept getting me in trouble. They lived in Warsaw, on 17 Panska Street. It wasn't a religious family, but a traditional one, they had a kosher kitchen. Aunt's husband was very active in Zionism. Kuba used to go to a Hebrew school, and probably belonged to Betar. They had a piggy-bank for Karen Kayemet at home and his father, whenever he could, would give money. My father didn't like it, Mom even less. Izaak was very talented. He used to play the violin, paint. He used to go to the Pilsudski School of Lithography on Konwiktorska Street in Warsaw. He also sang in a choir, in the Large Synagogue on Tlomackie, and whenever he had shows, the entire family tried to get there. I remember that synagogue as a large palace, staircase going up, lights. I felt strange there, a bit uneasy.

Kuba used to come over to our place, I used to go there, we played together, together we constructed the first radio detector with headphones, which was a big achievement. We used to tease Kuba's older brother, Izaak - we often broke his violin.

Almost every year we used to go for holidays with the family, usually to the so called Linia - a row of tourist-health resort towns located on the line Warsaw-Otwock. We went to Otwock, Falenica, once to Swider, many times to Miedzeszyn, once to Jablonna - summer resort towns near Warsaw. And once to Kazimierz. We usually took a train to the Linia, but we took a ship to Kazimierz on the Vistula River, from Warsaw. And our things, because we used to bring everything, we used to send by a horse carriage. I remember we would load things up at 6am and the horse carriage would get to the destination by night. Some summers Kuba came with us, too. Once Dad did it so that Aunt Chawcia and Izaak came as well.

In 1939 we went to a summer resort in Falenica, and Father even had a shop there, but without apprentices, I helped him there a little, but not much, I didn't really feel like working. I was 13, there were girls, Kuba was with us. Kuba was very popular with girls, he was outgoing, dark, I was jealous. There was the hosts' daughter, a pretty girl, Ziotka. When we knew that the war was coming, boys and girls used to say: 'Well, Ziotka, be careful, when the Germans come, you'll be doomed. But before that, you're for Kuba.'

When the war started and the bombings began, we went to Aunt Dobcia, another sister of Dad's, on Panska, she had a large apartment. There were lots of foreign people who didn't live in those buildings, but who, like us, were running away from other parts of the city, but nobody asked any questions. We all went to the basement, because they announced a bombing, and a bomb fell on that house. I know I lost consciousness. Everything went dark, it must have taken a while, when I woke up the basement was full of black dust, and people were pushing their way towards the exit to the stairway, I instinctively got out, and then heard some woman scream: 'Vu iz mayn man un mayne kinder?' 'Where is my husband and my children?'. And it was my mom. Then Dad showed up and Borus and Estusia, and it also turned out that in the same house there was Aunt Chawcia with her husband, Kuba and Izaak. And when we met at the gate, it turned out Izaak wasn't able to walk. Aunt Chawcia said there was a wooden exit door, and it hit him in the head. And when we all got outside to the street, Aunt Chawcia decided to go to Aunt Frania's on Wielka Street, and Dad

and Mom decided to go back to Niska. We parted and from later stories we know that Izaak died two days later.