

Eszter Gohman



This is my mother Eszter Gohman (nee Berghida). This photograph was taken in Mukachevo in 1921, before my parents' wedding. My mother gave it to my father as a token of love. My brother and I found this photo in the storeroom of our parents' half-ruined house in Mukachevo when we returned from a concentration camp in 1945. This is the only miraculously preserved during World War II photograph of my mother.

My mother Eszter, was born in Mukacevo in 1899. My mother worked for a dressmaker before getting married. I hardly know anything about my mother's life or her family before she got married. I also don't know how my parents met. After a traditional Jewish wedding in 1922, and it couldn't have been otherwise in their time, they rented an apartment. We lived in this apartment until 1944. It had one room, a kitchen and a storeroom that occupied half of a house.

My mother didn't wear wigs or kerchiefs. My mother had lovely hats, but they were a tribute to fashion rather than her desire to have her head covered. My mother only wore a kerchief once a year, at Yom Kippur. She had nice chestnut hair and she made nice hairdos. My mother liked perfume and jewelry. She wore fashionable clothes. When short skirts were in fashion she wore short skirts, especially in summer and she wore light clothes and high-heeled shoes.

Our family observed many Jewish traditions, but really they didn't accentuate their attention on them. For example, my mother always prepared for Sabbath. She baked challahs on Friday morning and cooked food for Sabbath. On Friday evening she lit candles. So we had candles lit on Sabbath and there was a challah for dinner, but it was a usual dinner: no blessing of the food and no prayers. This was the end of Sabbath. [Editor's note: this was the end of Sabbath in the Gohman family but Sabbath ends on the evening of the next day after the Havdalah ritual.] And the following day nobody thought that they shouldn't do any work. We spoke Hungarian at home and only when our parents didn't want us to understand the subject of their discussion they switched to Yiddish. They didn't teach us Yiddish.