

Antonia Margulies



This is my mother, Antonia Margulies, shot in front of the kitchen of our house in Czernowitz, before the deportation. We had built a glazed patio in front of the entrance. This is where the garden began. It had fruit trees. In the courtyard we bred chickens and a seasonal lamb, which we, the children, played with.

My mother was born near Czernowitz, in 1892. Jewish girls didn't have to go to cheder. She went to school at a catholic monastery in Vienna. She got her high school graduation certificate there. She

was particularly good at French and could also speak and read German and Yiddish. After she got married, she stopped working. My father was a high-ranking clerk and was paid well enough. We could afford a maid. I was born in Czernowitz, in 1921. My brother, Hary, was born in 1924. At home, we spoke German with my father and French with my mother.

My parents were religious, observed the holidays and kept the kashrut. On Fridays we would go to the town's Turkish bath; the place was mostly frequented by Jews. They lit a fire and the stones warmed up and became red. They poured water on them and the steam was so dense, that you couldn't see anything when you entered. We would go there in the morning, to have enough time to hang around. My father used to go to the synagogue every Friday evening, while my mother pronounced a benshen, i.e. she said a prayer before the candles. On Saturdays, my mother occasionally did some work; we weren't that devout after all. On Friday evenings we would eat various traditional dishes. I remember one of them. It was called pitze: it was made with eggs and was very spicy. But the dish that we ate most frequently was fish. In Czernowitz, the church's estate had a large fish market; in addition, there were 15-20 places where one could buy fish. Every other house had its own pool with live carp inside. You just went there and said, 'Give me a half' and you got it. Everyone ate fish on Friday evenings and Saturdays. At Passover, the town didn't have any bread. Most of the bakers were Jewish, and they wouldn't bake bread on Pesach. So everyone ate matzah. They wrapped them in a piece of cloth and carried them from house to house, so that everyone could buy.