

Irena Wygodzka With Friends In The Tatry Mountains



In this picture I am standing beside Moniek Fajner (second from left). The picture was taken in the late 1930s in Zakopane, in the Tatra Mountains.

Moniek was from Bedzin. His father used to come to Katowice, I knew him. Moniek Fajner had a brother, Karol, who ran away to the Soviet Union during the war and was deported to Kolyma.

He was in Magadan. And he labored there, in a mine. He labored there in very harsh conditions. He came to see me after he got back from Russia - without hair, eyebrows and eyelashes.

And Moniek Fajner left for Palestine in, I think, 1937. He wrote letters to me, he was in love with me, but I didn't write him back.

Almost every year we'd go on vacation. We'd leave the city for at least a month, or two. We'd take all our stuff. We'd go near Katowice, to Bystra, to Cyganski Las, sometimes to Rabka, always to southern Poland, Silesia.

I never went to the seaside before the war. Our more distant family would go with us, too, and we'd spend time there together. We'd rent cottages from peasants.

I remember this hotel in Zakopane. We'd live there and eat there. It was a Jewish hotel. The owners were Jewish, the guests were mostly Jewish too.

We met a young married couple during one of those vacations, they were staying in that hotel with us. And then we hiked in the mountains together.

We'd hike mostly in the valleys with the little sisters, we'd climb the Gubalowka, never too high. We were not professional hikers, I didn't have any special clothing, I hiked in my school coat.