

Judita Schvalbova With Her Mother And Grandmother



The first on the right is my mother, Melania Donathova, nee Pickova. Beside her is Grandma Maria Donathova, nee Polacsek. Yours truly is also in the picture. The photo was taken in 1938.

The beginnings of my grandma's life in Zilina were very hard for her, because she didn't know even a word of Slovak. My grandfather tried to help her learn Slovak as best he could, but somehow it didn't go very well for her. He also brought in a young maid from Liptov, so she could learn Slovak from her, but the opposite happened and very soon the maid spoke better Hungarian than my grandma Slovak. There was one cute story about my grandmother that was told in Zilina. When my grandmother could already get by with her Slovak, she went out to the market. In those days, fowl pest was common in the Zilina region. It used to be a custom to bring live poultry to the market. Well, and she saw some farmwoman selling a goose that had already been killed and cleaned. She became suspicious, whether that goose hadn't died of the pest. She tried to find out with her broken Slovak, and began to ask the farmwoman, 'Lady, does that goose kick?' Meaning did it kick the bucket, that's how she meant it. And the woman answered, 'Well, my lady, I'm old, gray, but I've never seen a goose kicking!' So this was a story they told about my grandma in Zilina.

My mother was born on 17th January 1910 in Horni Hricov near Zilina. She went to Gymnazium in Zilina, so she had a high school education. Before the war my mother didn't work anywhere, as she married quite young and was a housewife.

It's hard for me to recall details of how my parents met. Young Jewish people used to meet in Zilina, and somewhere there they met. They were married in 1931, but I don't know the exact date. I wasn't born until five years later. Our family's financial situation was very good. I think that we lived well. We had nice furniture, my mother liked nice things. She liked buying china, part of which I have in my collection now, and the rest is from my grandma Pickova. My parents dressed in a modern way, always according to the fashion of the day.