

Helena Najberg With Her Husband Jakub Najberg



This is me, Helena Najberg, with my husband Jakub Najberg. I don't know where and when the photo was taken. It must have been taken by some photographer or friend but I don't remember exactly.

I was the only one to survive the war from my closest family. It's difficult to explain how that happened. After all, I went through so many of those camps. Perhaps it was my strength of character which helped me? Because I am, by nature, an optimist. That's my character and maybe that's what saved me. It's difficult to say what gave me strength. I am still amazed until today that I survived all that and many years after that gave birth to children. I had doubts about that. Well, but luckily I somehow managed to conceive and give birth to my children.

The first thing I did in Lodz was go to the Jewish community. It was somewhere on Piotrkowska Street at that time, I can't remember where. There I got half a loaf of bread, half a kilo of sugar and 50 zloty. I could only survive for a few days with that money. It was a one-time ration. I asked if I could spend the night somewhere, because I didn't have a place, but I had to find that by myself. I never went to my house. I haven't been there till today, in that house where we had lived, something keeps me away from it. I did meet the caretaker once and she was very friendly towards me. She even told me to go there: 'A doctor is living there now, but you can throw him out, because it's your apartment.'

After the war I started working at the Voivodship [District] Militia Headquarters. I had to survive somehow! I started working there and I made it for some twenty-something years, until I got my disability pension. At first I was a typist, then a secretary, later the director of a department.

I never hid my heritage, God forbid. Well, I never really bragged about who I was, but when someone asked me I'd always tell the truth. I didn't have any problems because of that. I was well liked, I don't know why, but people never expressed hostility or any kind of disgust. But when I came back after the war I decided to change my name and my parents' names. I did it for my children. I didn't have them yet, but I was thinking about it. I didn't want them to have 'son of Chaja' or 'daughter of Chaja' in their documents. I knew that if someone wanted to find out they could find out from his last name, but I didn't want my kids to be hurt. I'd rather not have them called names at school, as it sometimes happens. We've never been loved.

In 1946 I got married to Jakub Najberg. We worked in the same department. I was a typist and he worked in the warehouse. Was it love? It's hard to say. At first I was a bit confused, but I saw he was a good man, calm, didn't drink. So I thought to myself: 'why should I look for great love, a prince on a white horse?'

It was difficult for us at first. We didn't make much money, the salaries were very low. I didn't have anything to wear. And only later, slowly, slowly, you'd buy something, sometimes get something from Unra, some clothes. And later, when I got this pension and my husband did as well, it was easier for us, because we had more money.

We have two children: son Jerzy and daughter Lila. Our children knew who they were, they knew of their parents' past, they knew about Jewish customs, tradition. But we didn't even take them to the synagogue.