

Anna Lanota



This photo was taken by Aleksandra Bankowska, my Centropa interviewer, when she once came to talk to me.

It was in October 2004. It is naturally in my house. I sit in my favorite armchair. I live in Szymanówek, a small place, a village in fact, near Warsaw [about 40 km from Warsaw]. It is located at the edge of the Kampinos forests.

Some years ago I lived in Warsaw, in the Bielany quarter. I moved here, to Szymanówek only a few years ago. The house belongs to my daughter Malgosia and my son-in-law, Michał. The house is very spacious.

We rent out rooms during summer and winter holidays. Many people come here from Warsaw to rest in the forests. Also members of our family from Poland and Israel are often our guests. We always celebrate Pesach together with our Polish branch of the family.

I didn't bring up my daughter close to the religion because I am a non-believer, but I brought her up to be aware that she is Jewish, and that that is something good, something to be proud of.

My grandsons, Piotr and Jan, whose father is a Pole, consider themselves Jews. We always celebrate Pesach, and Christmas in the winter, not as religious festivals, but because we like them.

The happiest festival is Pesach that we celebrate in Szymanowek . My grandsons and their friends come round. We sit down and read the Haggadah, in Polish, because no-one understands it in any other language any more; we put the cup on the table and open the door for the prophet to come in.

When the boys were small they believed that the prophet had come, because the wine in the cup went down. I used to hide matzah from them and they used to pretend that they didn't know where. After reading the Haggadah we eat supper.

There is matzah instead of bread, and a host of festive dishes: fish, chicken soup, charoset. We have a special cookbook and cook using it. It's a very happy day, like it was at my parents'.