

Zsuzsa Diamantstein



This picture was taken in Petrozsény, on the tennis courts. In it there's my mother Paula Riemer, who then was called Riegelhaupt. She is third from right, in the black dress. She sits next to a man in white shirt, and on her right that's her younger sister Aliz. They are both in black because they were mourning grandmother Sari Mittelman, who died in 1926. I don't know which relatives, acquaintances or family friends are in the picture, who used to go there and play tennis and we used to watch them. On the side, second from left, that's me at the age of 4, and my fosterer is next to me, a Saxon girl, called Grete. She taught me German and I liked her very much. She was from Szaszsebes and worked for us until I started school.

My [paternal] grandmother's siblings, the Goldmans, built a lumber factory in Lonya, Lonea in Romanian. This is a coal mine settlement in the county of Hunyad. Lonya is near Petrozsény, a few kms away, then comes Petrilla [the distance between Petrozsény and Petrilla is 5kms]. These are all coal mine settlements in the Zsil valley. There was this lumber-mill and this is how my uncle Sandor ended up there at the age of 15 to learn timbering. I don't know exactly how their life went on, but it is a fact that they got to the Zsil valley [together with my father] when they were already adults, and it was still a Hungarian world then [Editor's note: Zsuzsa Diamantstein refers to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy] and so they remained here, in Romania [Editor's note: that is Lonya got under Romanian authority after the Trianon Peace Treaty] My father was the manager of the lumber-mill and my uncle did the business part, he traveled, he was a timber merchant.

I was born here in Vasarhely, on 17th June 1922, in my grandparents' house, in the Mestitz house, because my mom came home from Lonya to give birth, because there was just a mill and she wanted to give birth here, near her mother. Women used to give birth at home then, not in the hospital. My mother couldn't feed me because there were no nutrients then, so I had a foster nurse. My grandmother found out in the meantime that in Vasarhely there were nutrients, some Swiss ones, called Nestle. This product appeared then and my grandmother sent it to my mother, to try to feed me with it, because I was starving a lot, so I cried almost all the time, because I had

nothing to eat, the babies were raised by breast-feeding then. Later I had a governess called Grete.

My parents had a very nice life. There were many young people then. There were no pools then, but at the lumber mill there was tennis court for the clerks, and they used to play tennis. There was a canteen, a shared kitchen, a woman cook, so mom didn't have to cook. There was a jolly life, they used to go with a two-horse carriage to Petrozseny to the candy store and cafe. I don't know if there was a cinema or not, but it was a casino and they also used to get together there to play cards. They had a lot of fun, they lived well.

Some of the clerks who worked there were Jews, on the other hand there were many Jews in Petrozseny, and a synagogue, too. Regarded to those times, uncle Goldmann was a manager who had a very high social concern, and built beautiful workers' dwellings. These were storied, beautiful brick buildings. The workers had one or two room apartments, the clerks had a separate building and they also lived in Lonya, but not in the workers' dwellings, but in another area of the mill, where there was a separate building for clerks, with apartments with more rooms. A one room apartment was given to two singles and the newly married couples, while those with families got a two room apartment. There was a common bath, because they had a boiler. The guests who came to buy board or were on business trip, were lodged in guest-chambers, because there was no hotel in Lonya.

We had an apartment, too, in the building where the clerks lived. I don't remember exactly if we had one or two rooms. My dad managed the whole lumber mill while he was healthy. When my father fell sick and didn't work anymore in Lonya, we had a very nice apartment in Petrozseny then, four rooms, bathroom, balcony, in a word it was a very nice apartment we rented. They lived very happily there, my mother was well off, she was unbelievably pampered, she didn't work anywhere.