

Hermina Sebestyen With Her Children



Here's my maternal grandmother, Hermina Sebestyen, on the far right dressed in white. My mother, Leonora, is barely in the armchair, the smallest of the three children. On the left of the armchair is Lili and on the right is Erno. This could have been taken in the Ullo street apartment, or at Grandpa Schon's. My great grandparents, the Schons, lived very close to us, so it might have been taken there. I can see wood paneling, and a very beautiful statue stand. I remember that. They had a lot of beautiful old things. In the background, a Hungarian tablecloth, curtain can be seen. I don't remember that armchair that was my mother's. My grandfather, Mano Sebestyen married my grandmother, Hermina Schon, and she became Mrs. Mano Sebestyen. I don't know when my grandfather was born, I only know that he died in 1933, when I was fifty. He was probably born in Homonna ? in Slovakia now ? but I'm not sure of that. My grandmother, Hermina Schon, was born in Veszprem in 1870. I don't know how they met. Their marriage probably took place in Budapest at the end of the 1800s, because their first child Erno was born in 1895. My maternal grandparents had four children, none of them are still living. Though my grandmother had her teacher accreditation, she didn't work. Women traditionally took care of the raising of children then. In the 1920s, it was not an easy thing to raise four children from one income. My uncle, Erno Sebestyen was the oldest. He worked a bit as a lawyer and was able to live through the war with false documents, working in a factory. There was a pretty big age difference between Erno and their next child, Lilike who was born in 1901. She died young around 1930. The family never got over her death. It was a tragedy for us, she got blood poisoning and they couldn't cure her. Then came my mother, Leonora Sebestyen, born in 1904 and probably died in Ravensbruck. My mother spoke very eloquently and attended the acting school for a while. But nothing came of that, most likely, due to financial reasons, she had to quit. She became a housewife and lived at home. My grandparents' youngest child, Lajos Sebestyen, was born in 1908. Both the boys, Erno and Lajos were trained as lawyers, and for my grandfather to afford that expense, his two daughters had to find husbands from wealthy families. That was the cost of educating the boys. The girls succeeded. Note well, that the boys couldn't really practice because, by the time they were qualified, the

Jewish laws came in. The older brother, my uncle Erno Sebestyen, probably lawyered a little bit, but Lajos never did. Lajos got married in the early 1940s, to Magda Wollak. They had a tropical fruit grocery on Erkel street. Lajos died in a labor camp in the Ukraine. The last we heard from him was in 1943. I still have the letter, in which he wrote that in a few days, they're taking him with the 41st or 42nd battalion, and to try to help him, but we didn't succeed. The Arrow Cross shot Magda into the Danube.