

Zsusza Diamantstein



This is a picture of me. It was taken in Szaszregen, but it does not mention the name of the studio. It was taken on my 20th birthday, that is in 1942. I sent it to grandpa. We were already living in Regen then. It says: 'To my dear grandpa with love, their oldest grandchild, Zsusza.'

An anti-Semitism wave began then, and it was very hard for the Jews to enter the university. Usually we, Jewish girls, didn't study further [at a university], we rather learned a profession - we got to a tailor shop or a hairdresser salon or in other places - because our parents considered thus we will have better success in life. Mom sent me as apprentice in a tailor shop because she thought it was a very good profession, and I would see later I would go to my uncle to Vienna etc., etc. There were two sisters in Vasarhely, the Kun sisters, they were very decent people. They had a tailor shop at the end of the Saros street, upstairs, where the Azomures has a store now. We made a contract, mom paid the fees, but I had to go to an apprentice school, which was a public school. When we went to learn a profession, we made a contract with the employer, which stated that we had to work there three years as apprentice, and only then we got an employment record so we could work there as assistants. Usually, those who went to work didn't pay, but worked there to learn the profession.

I started apprentice school in 1939. I didn't have to graduate high school for that, four grades were just enough. We had the little graduation only for ourselves, the girls who finished the four grades of high school had to finish only two years in the apprentice school. Those who had just elementary school, had to finish three years of apprentice school. The school's building is the fire-station at the moment on Horea street. In one section of the building there were the girls, in another one the

boys. There were apprentices for all professions. We had many interesting classes there, nice and meaningful classes, but we didn't learn the profession there. We learned only general subjects there: grammar, history, geography, arithmetics, book-keeping and so on. There was an excellent arithmetics teacher. Learning was serious there. We learned in Romanian because it was a public school, but only an apprentice school. We had different teachers for each class. There was an interesting class, ethics, based on religion, but the Christian religion.

In the meantime, while I was attending the apprentice school, my stepfather was transferred to Szaszregen. Thus we had to move to Szaszregen in 1939. I continued to learn this 'beautiful' profession, so I remained with my grandparents, I lived with them until I finished the two years of apprentice school in 1941 - I even went to work from there.

When I finished school, I ended up in Regen, and my life somewhat fell apart. I don't have too pleasant memories from this period. I can't say I had a beautiful youth there. I got to a tailor shop, and the salary I got there was minimal. Not to mention that I hated, I hated it so much... An old Jewish woman was the owner, Sari Kraus, and the tailor shop was full of spinsters. They hated me because I was young, and because they knew I didn't really live from what I earned there, I didn't have to slave because I had parents, so it was terrible what I have gone through in that tailor shop. Not to mention that I hated sewing and I wasn't skillful, so it was a hard period for me, I cried a lot...Then my grandpa said, it was enough, she remained home [Zsusza] It was for a short time, until 1944. I helped mom at home. I didn't like Regen.