

Edit Grossmann



I was born in Nagyenyed in 1922, I was called Rajzele in Jewish.

We were a religious, Orthodox [Jewish] family. My mammy [Eszter Grosz, nee Klein] was very religious, so was my father [Herman Grosz]. My parents were very kind-hearted people, very straight, very honest, and that's what they taught us as well. There wasn't such thing that honesty could be lacking. Dad always used to say that one had only one thing in life, their honesty. They brought us up to what Jewry meant.

We are Orthodox even today. My [daughter's] family in Israel still observes religion rigorously. My sister {Miriam Jakobovits, nee Grossmann} observed it too, well they were exaggeratedly religious. Me as well, I observed kashrut after I got married. And I often think back, perhaps it was a better feeling. Somehow we knew that Friday evening, that Sabbath, it was something, it meant something. Today there is nothing. After the children were born, I kept a kosher household for some ten years more. And I had the poultry cut at the shochet, until we had a shochet, I always had them cut there. Then the shochet died, and it was over. After that I sent to Kolozsvar to have them cut there, approximately until 1970. I never cut poultry at home until then, because I didn't like it, I had a dread of it. But I kept a proper kosher household, I had separate dishes for milk and for meat, even though my husband started to have different principles.

Today I don't keep [kashrut] anymore, because I don't have the means for it. Today one can not find kosher meat in Des. But the procedure, that the meat had to be soaked out and salted, koshered, well it's something very good, because it eliminates the blood. And we have a law in our Jewish religion, which says that we shouldn't eat blood. I also salt the meat when I buy some. Sometimes I prepare fish in aspic even today, I like it a lot. It's made with vegetables, it's very good. It's made of fish heads, and it needs an entire fish too. They collect heads for me, put them

aside in the freezer. My daughter-in-law's daughter, Juliana puts aside fish heads for me, she sends them to me, and I prepare it. We take out the bitterness from the head [the so-called pearl button or bitter bone], which is at its ears, but the head must be put in unbroken, because that's what it grants the jelly-like substance. First I boil the vegetables a little, when it's half-boiled, I put in the two or three pieces of fish and two or three heads. It needs a little sugar too, our cuisine, the Jewish cuisine uses sugar - we put even in the green beans soup, we put a little sugar in everything. And at a very gentle oven it becomes gelatinous, we filter it, and decorate with vegetables. It's very-very good. At Jewish weddings they always had fish in aspic. Everybody had a portion of fish in a small bowl, glass plate. This was the Jewish starter. They ate fish in aspic on Friday evening and on Sabbath at noon.

On Friday evening I light the three candles: I light one for my parents, I light one for the family, for my sister, for my uncle, and I light one for my own family. I still observe Pesach. I don't have Pesach dishes, I tell you honestly, I simply sterilize the dishes. I have a large keeler, I put in the dishes, I sterilize them all, I cook with those dishes. But observing means only that I buy poultry. Somebody cuts it for me, I soak it out, salt it, so I observe it to some extent.

Nowadays I go to Kolozsvár on holidays. When they take me there. The Bilbaum boy [member of the Jewish community of Des] takes me, so when he does, I go. We used to observe Pesach here in Des, while my husband was alive, and recited the Seder [conducted the Seder night ritual]. After my husband died [in 1994], we kept on observing, but nobody recited the Seder [there wasn't anybody to conduct the ritual]. We just ate the egg, drank some wine, and we concluded that it made no sense like that. There is no Jewry in Des. It died out. There were very religious people in Des, they recited the prayers very well. They died, they died out. This generation has no other destiny than extinction. They are all old. Recently Mrs. Bilbaum died. It's only me and Ella Motlai who are left among women. And there is one more Jewish woman, whose father and mother were Jews, but her parents didn't observe anything, so she doesn't know anything on Jewry, she doesn't observe anything. So it's only me and Ella, who know something on Jewry. If we take men, there's Hirsch - his wife, Livia works at the Jewish community, she's Romanian -, he's well up in it, he comes from a religious family, and Farkas [Editor's note: Jozsef Farkas, Centropa interviewed him as well], he also comes from a religious family. The two of them know what Jewry consists of, what a Jewish household is. But neither Farkas, nor Hirsch have Jewish wives, so there is nothing Jewish in their homes. It's the woman who maintains Jewry at home.

Today [after 1989] my life is much easier, you don't have such difficulties that for example you go out and you can't buy bread, can't buy this or that. Well, to be honest I don't have any problems, I have oil, I have sugar, I have everything at home. It's just the medical care, which is really bad, very-very bad. But an old person can't comprehend the change, the youth experiences it differently, and elderly people in a different way. Old people have a completely different life than young people. It would be great to be young now. Nowadays it's much better for the young than it used to be. A lot of things have changed, a lot, and young people have great advantages.

If my husband were alive, we would be fine. He had a very good pension, he had fifty years [worked]. And I didn't choose his pension, I chose mine, and it's very low. [Editor's note: Edit Grossmann doesn't get any money after her husband.] Everybody tells me: 'You see, that's what you worked for.' But I had only twenty years [officially registered as working years], because unfortunately my daughter was very ill, I always had many problems, and I didn't go to work. The

community helps me sometimes, and my son and my daughter helps me a little, that's what I live of.