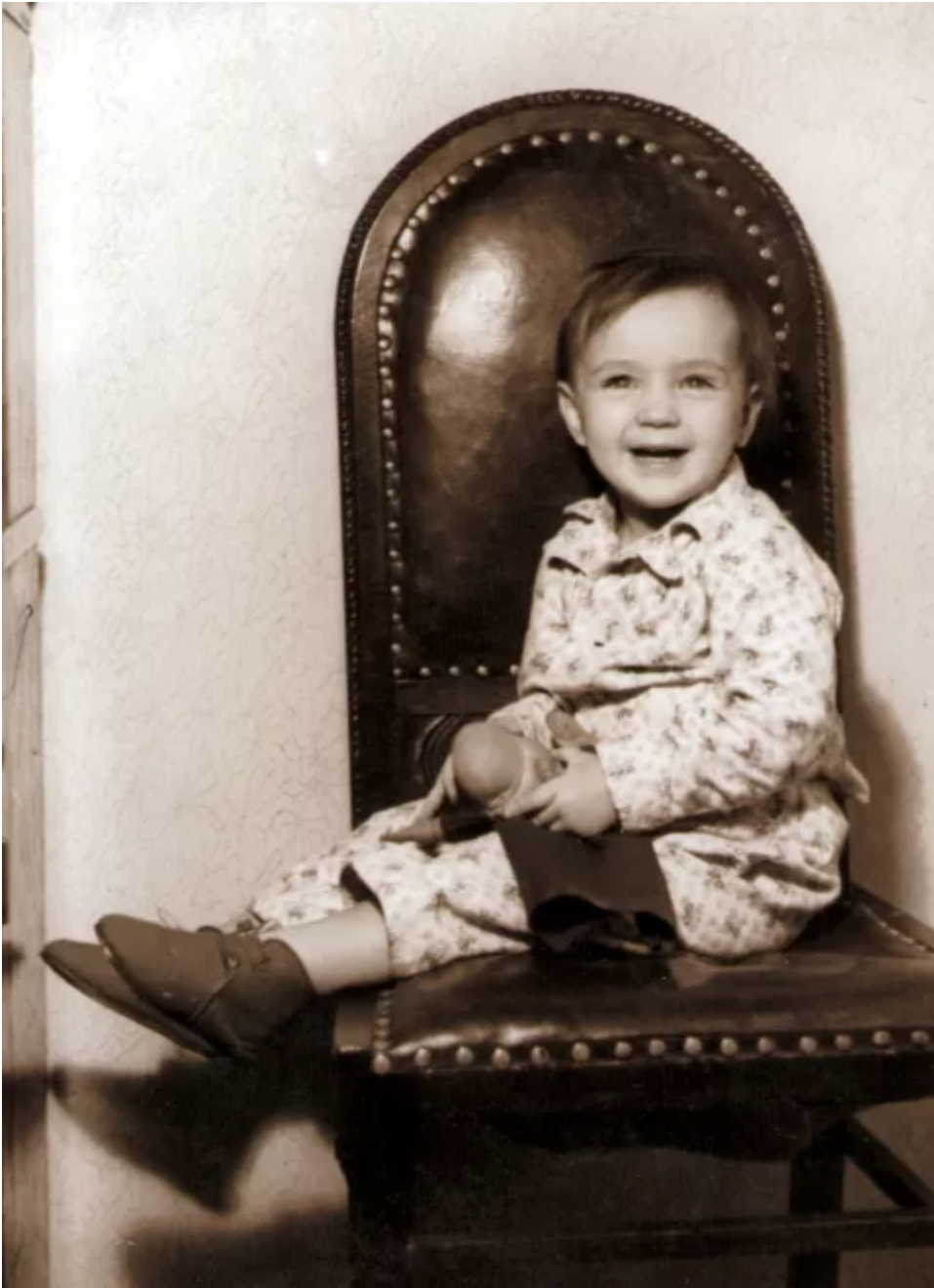


Kati Andai's Little Sister Maria Erdos



My sister Maria. My mother was 45 years old when she gave birth to another child. She asked me when she became pregnant. She told me that according to the laws of nature, this child would outlive her and live on with me. 'Will you take care of it?' she asked. I said I would. I was already 21 years old then, and when my mother became ill, my sister went to school from my house, and later to the university for a time, until she left to study in Cuba. In 1956 my sister went to Vienna, but she came back; now she had a criminal record, and they wouldn't admit her to university. Then she entered into a bad marriage with a boy whose parents were doctors, and who had contracted infantile paralysis at the age of 18, hence he dragged one foot. Marika complained that they didn't admit her to the university. They had a girlfriend, an immigrant Russian Jewish woman, who taught Russian to the whole government. She was on good terms with everybody. And they told her that Marika had a criminal record and they wouldn't admit her. 'Oh', she said, 'that means nothing'. She wrote down all the details, went to one of her former students who was at the Ministry of Interior.

They went to the place where they kept everybody's personal documents. They took out the one about prison; it simply didn't exist anymore. She was admitted. And there, because she was the best at Spanish in her year, she naturally got a scholarship to Cuba. She lived in Cuba for 14 years, and got her university degree there. She speaks Spanish like a native speaker; and because she was a student of English, she works as a Spanish-English simultaneous interpreter.