

Maria Feheri With Her Family



This is me and some of my family. From left to right: my mother, Erzsebet Antal, nee Rasko, me, my son Gyuri Antal and my grandmother, Julia Rasko, nee Altmann. Grandmother Julia was from Transylvania. When they came to Budapest, I don't know. My mum was born in Kezdivasarhely, but if I'm correct, her sisters were not. I think they came to Budapest around World War I, or even before. My grandmother's father was Christian. Her mother, when she became a widow, already had a big daughter, and together with this Jewish girl, this Jewish woman got married to a very decent Christian farm manager. Because her mother was Jewish, my grandmother was Jewish, too. My grandmother believed in God and prayed. I remember a prayer book, in which she'd put a lock of my hair, as the first grandchild. But my grandparents couldn't have been very observant. Grandmother didn't work, she gave birth to five children, and brought them up. She was a wonderful grandmother, a real brood-hen; she was always talking about the five children, about how hard it was with that many girls. Grandmother lived with her daughter Margit most of the time. She always came over to us, and looked after me and my younger brother. She was 81 or 82 years old, when she died, in or around 1958. My mother graduated from the Szilagyai high school, and then she studied something to do with horticulture, and she worked in that field. She learnt to tailor and to sew just as a hobby. But she didn't really have a profession; she was a housewife, and was at home. Later, after the war, she worked in public health as a hospital caretaker, and she completed courses. So she was skilled in hospital management. I got married in 1949. In 1952 I had a premature delivery, Andras: he died quite soon after. Then came Gyuri in 1953, and in 1965 there was Gabor. The children knew that they were Jews, we didn't hide that, but we didn't raise them to be religious because we already didn't believe, either. When, in 1956 my son asked about little Jesus [traditionally, Christmas presents are said to be brought by little Jesus, rather than Santa Claus], when he was three years old, my husband said to him, 'Gyuri, there is no little Jesus, but you don't have to tell that to others because it hurts people'. It happened once, in a shop, that somebody asked, 'Son, what has little Jesus brought you?' He said to the man that there was no little Jesus and that, '[his] father told me that one doesn't have to talk about this'. So Gyuri knew,

and Gabor knew as well. And our close friends knew. Somehow our circle of friends formed in a way that they were all Jews, with one exception.