

Mina Fischbein



This is my mother, Mina Fischbein. That picture was taken in Warsaw in the 1950s by a professional photographer. I think she needed it for a document, but I don't know for which one. After the war, my parents remained in Walbrzych. There was a bathroom in their apartment. I remember my mother, by then more than a 40-year-old woman, coming out of that bathroom and saying "A mekhaye! [Yiddish for "happiness, bliss?]. That was one clever bourgeois who invented the bathroom! My mother didn't work; she took care of the house. She never let go of the Jewish ways of cooking. But we ate every kind of meat, also pork. My mother never used recipes. She didn't let me into the kitchen, because you needed to save and there was always the danger I would spoil something, or make a dish not to her liking. So if I did anything in the kitchen it was as a helper, peeling vegetables, mostly. When we were in the kitchen together, I'd ask her, "How much of that did you use? How much of this does one put in?" To that she'd say, "As much as it takes, you'll feel it in your fingers." Not particularly precise, but for her it sufficed. I remember there was matzah at home after the war. But I don't know where it was from. I know that the Jewish Committee in Walbrzych did distribute matzah. They moved to Warsaw at the beginning of 1950.

The party suddenly remembered my father. At first, my father worked for NIK in the Department of Personnel and Training [NIK: Supreme Chamber of Control, which controls the activity of all state institutions]. Then he worked at the headquarters supervising Construction of Housing for Workers. My mom didn't work, she was always mom. My sister lived with them. We didn't have much time together, because when I turned 23, in 1952, I got married.