

Wacek Kornblum's Stepmother Lonia Kornblum And Her Sister Mania



This is my stepmom Lonia in 1921. I don't know where this picture was taken.

My mom Lonia - Lea Kornblum - nee Mileband, was born in 1900. Dad got married to Lonia some time around 1929. I don't have information what school she went to, but she was a teacher before

she got married, a home room teacher, and she may have also taught Polish at Korczak's, on Krochmalna Street. When I was little she didn't work, but later, when we weren't doing too well, she learnt how to make corsets, there were two additional sewing machines at home for Mother. I learnt how to sew and used to help Mom to sew bras, so called full ones, you had to put the cups in first. Later Mom realized it would be better for her to open her own store instead of providing bras to other stores. And she opened a store on Rymarska Street, in the other part of the store there was a dressmaker or a haberdasher. It could have been in 1936, didn't last long. We used to go there some time to visit Mom, My brother Borus was nuts about those visits.

I knew Lonia wasn't my mom, but I didn't feel it. Mom was a very smart woman. But from the time perspective, I realize I didn't experience true motherly love. In our house we spoke Polish with Mom, Jewish with dad. Parents spoke usually Jewish to each other. Mom was from Bundist circles, but I can't say she was an activist. It was rather a group of friends, well-wishers of Bund.

One day an order came to our shop, that whoever has a pass must go to Majzelsa Street. It turned out there would be a selection there. It was 27th August 1942.

They set us all up in a square. Mom was a terrible coward, was always afraid of something. Dad wasn't with us there, he was in his shop on Nalewki. And Mom stood with her niece Estusia at the back. And I stood in the first row. Two Germans stood before us. Two people from the shop management stood beside them with pieces of paper in their hands - they had lists. And they would call out a name and that person would run across to the other side of the street and a new block of people would form there. Who were staying in the ghetto to keep working in the shop. At some point I realized they read the same names twice, because they called and nobody would come up, I realized they wanted to save some people this way. And after some name there was such a moment of silence, and I jumped ahead to that other group. When they finished the selection, all those 'chosen ones' were pushed to a backyard of some building, they opened the gate, the police surrounded us, people ran up to those policemen, because they knew that among the detained were their relatives who didn't make the selection. I had some money on me, because we all had some money then just in case, I got a hold of one and said: 'Listen, there is my mom and a cousin, take this money and give it to them'. And I gave him all I had, I'm certain he didn't pass it to them. I didn't know where to go, I went to Nalewki to the apartment near Dad's shop.

Now I think my parents knew something was about to happen with that selection, because Borus didn't go to Ogrodowa then. He usually went with Mom to the shop. He slept in the apartment on Nalewki. In 'our' apartment there were still beds and bed linens, before we went to Ogrodowa with Mom and Estusia on that unfortunate day, they decided that he Borus would stay and we covered him with the bed linens in the bed. I remember Dad was worried he wouldn't be able to breathe.

I went back, the door was locked, the key was taken away so I couldn't get open and inside, I sat on the stairs and waited, maybe they'll open. Dad learnt earlier Mom and Estusia were taken away. Uncle tried to get something in motion, some policeman apparently went to Umschlagplatz. Too late. Dad came back, I told him how it was, we opened the door, uncovered my brother and he started to scream: 'where's Mom', but he understood. He was in despair. We went back to Niska, to the bunker. There were only: Dad, Wladek, and me. And I remember how Dad just sat alone and cried.