

## Ferenc Szabados



This photo was taken in Budapest. I took it out of some identification, but I don't remember which.

I was born in Ilk in 1920. I went to Civil School in Vasarosnameny. I even moved there during that time. I could have done more than three years, in fact I got a scholarship on the basis of my good educational results. My father, however, couldn't even pay the reduced tuition. So I was left with tailoring. While in Nameny, I learned the tailor trade as an apprentice. My older brothers, Jenó and Erno had gone to the same school and learned tailoring and sewing there, too.

Nameny was a lot bigger place than Ilk, almost a city. They had a number of prayer houses, for there were 180 Jewish families living there. There wasn't one neolog among them, but there were some who were more religious than most. They dispersed to temples all over, according to their liking or their acquaintances. I remember there was a house of prayer for young people. The congregation in Vasarosnameny was serious. With kosher butchers, rabbis, jeshivas and mainly - why we went there - with cheders. We woke up at half past five in the morning, we prayed and then started our studies. By eight we were already sitting in the Protestant school, and in the afternoon we were learning in the cheder again. The Jewish community there supported us. They

placed us at a merchant's house, I slept there, but I ate somewhere else everyday. They organized who would have lunch for the Jewish kids from Ilk. We studied the Tora and Talmud in the afternoon, so we would progress in Judaism, too. I went home from Vasarosnameny every two weeks. We were so poor that I had to walk. I would have some fun by driving a wagon wheel in front of me with a stick the whole way. On the Sabbath, Jews who knew a little more about Judaism would come into the city and ask us questions. Every week they tested us.

When Erno and I finished out our apprenticeship, there was money waiting for us at the post office for train tickets. We joined up with Jenő, who had opened a tailorshop on Baross street. Both of them changed their name from Schwartz to Szabados, Jenő in 1936 and Erno in 1937. I joined my two older brothers in Pest in 1937. I was stunned when I got to Pest and I saw my brothers eating treyfl.

I made primarily Jewish friends in Ilk and Nameny. When I suddenly found myself in Pest, we had Christian friends, too. We didn't keep kosher. Mother wasn't there to watch us. Until I went to work service in 1941, we regularly went on excursions, to the cinema, and to dance classes. Although most of our friends were Jews, we also made friends with Christians. It wasn't a reason to exclude someone, because we saw everyone for the person they were. If they were respectable, we were made friends with them.