

Purim In The Jewish Community



This picture was taken in Gdansk in 2006 during Purim in the Jewish Community. That's what I look like now, as I'm telling you my story.

I became independent, shook off the shackles. Because I couldn't admit who I was.

I didn't know about the Jewish organizations that were being founded. We got a divorce.

I went into retraining and got a new, interesting job. It was a public institution and I worked there for 40 years until my retirement.

I'm an employee of merit, have been awarded the knight's cross, various medals...

In 1959 I was transferred to Gdansk. I married again and gave birth to a daughter, Kasia.

My second husband didn't know who I was, knew nothing about my origin.

I told my daughter, but fear and anxiety are in me to this day. I'll never get rid of this. My children aren't afraid.

My grandson, when in the third year of his exclusive high school here, came once to me and said, 'Grandma, I have this assignment, I'm to draw my genealogical tree and list relatives who suffered during the war and where.'

And he knew I was Jewish. I told him, 'Don't put it there, I'm asking you.'

'What for? You'll have problems, perhaps there are anti-Semites at your school.' 'I'm not ashamed of it and I'll put it there', he said.

I've never been to Israel. I was afraid it would be too much for me.

I'm 85 now, but my granddaughter's been there many times, also as part of Jewish summer camps organized by Rabbi Schudrich, Chief Rabbi of Poland.

So my children aren't afraid and I'm still afraid. All the time.

I'm a member of the Jewish community. I'm the secretary, now also the chairperson, of the Gdansk branch of the Association of Jewish War Veterans and Victims of World War II.

I'm not a full member of the Children of the Holocaust but I have honorary membership, I'm very active, I've done lectures for high school students.

I needed it very much then and I need it now. I attend every Shabbat and that's very important for me, that I go there like to my family, that I'm on friendly terms with everybody there, sometimes we argue, sometimes someone is cross with someone else, sometimes I don't agree with something they do, but the bottom line is that I can say everything there, I don't have to hide.

They feel the same, the old veterans, they are afraid, have the same fear deep down their souls. I know many people who do their best for no one to find out they are Jewish.

It's hard to say what my attitude towards religion is. Sometimes it seems to me I'm an atheist, sometimes I believe...

I know for sure that my mama protects me. I've been in extreme situations, it was a miracle I survived them, and I believe it's my mother who led me and protected me somehow.

If I lose something and am looking for it, I pray to St. Anthony, because I believe in St. Anthony.

I go to the community, I say the prayers, because I'm the eldest member now, we bless the candles, I put on my tichel and recite the prayers in Hebrew.

I'm very moved then. Feeling unity with my ancestors.