

Emilia Leibel's Daughter, Halina



This is my daughter Halinka. She might have been 3 or 4 years old. My husband Julek used to carry this picture in his wallet.

Julek Leibel was friendly with my father. They had common business interests. He was his 'gesheft freund.' 'Geschaeft' [Yid.: gesheft] means 'business' in German. And he used to come to our apartment, to see Father. He was a lot older than me, and I was in love with him, I gazed at him like a dog at the moon. All I used to do was serve tea or something, as you do for guests. It didn't occur to me that he took any interest in me at all. I was a modest girl. What was I? A young girl

without a penny, without a dowry, and he was rich, had a car. What that meant back then! Julek was an independent leather exporter, and my father was a modest Jew, bought the hides himself and then dispatched them. And I was completely surprised and amazed when one day my mother called me into the dining room, where a distant uncle was sitting, the father of my future husband, and Mother said that he'd come to ask whether I would marry Julek. And I was speechless. I said that of course I would. He liked me, and that was it. He even bought me a trousseau - he didn't buy it, he gave Father money, so that nobody would know, and Mother got me some linens together, what I had to have, so that I'd have a trousseau. The wedding was 3 months after the marriage proposal.

Julek's grandparents and my in-laws lived in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. My in-laws came from Kalwaria, but they'd later moved to Wadowice [approx. 40 km from Cracow]. My husband was born in Wadowice and had even been at high school back in Wadowice - the same high school that the Pope [John Paul II] went to. I don't know why they moved back to Kalwaria.

Before we moved to Kalwaria we went to Italy - that was a beautiful honeymoon.

Our daughter, Halinka, was born on 14 June 1934.

There were a lot of Jews in Kalwaria. There was a synagogue there, but we didn't go. My parents-in-law went, my father-in-law. We rented an apartment straight away, and at my behest the apartment was altered. There were 2 large rooms and a huge kitchen, but no WC and no bathroom. Only at my request was the kitchen divided, and a hall, bathroom and WC made. That engineer, the brother-in-law [Jozef Krygier], designed how it would be. That apartment was in a good spot, on the town square near the church, in a farmer's house. I don't remember what his name was.

I got on very well with my mother-in-law, and my father-in-law was very fond of me. He was no longer working, but they were all still taken up with the leather business. Wouldn't I have preferred to stay in Cracow? If he had business there, I went there to be with him. I'd have gone to hell to be with him, not just to Kalwaria. I was madly in love. What my husband's firm was called? It wasn't called anything - there was just a wagon full of goods, off it went, and that was it. Abroad. I don't know exactly where those wagons went.

When I got married, our maid from Czarnieckiego Street went with me to Kalwaria, but she lasted it a few months and then left. Said she was bored. There were 3 or so people from the village working for my husband, so the daughter of one of them came - and shortly afterwards got married. And after that I had local maids - they were very easy to hire. The working conditions were good at our house: there were 2 rooms, one child, good pay, board, the washerwoman came to take the linen - the maid wasn't overworked. She used to go with me and Halinka for walks - a little further up the hill there was a place where you could go for walks, because further on, to the [Bernadine] monastery, you couldn't go, because Jews were not allowed in. So we had to turn back before the monastery. On the whole we cooked kosher food, which wasn't to say that we didn't buy ham, but we had kosher crockery so that my father could eat with us when he came to visit.