

Irena Wygodzka With Her Friends From Akiba



In this picture I am with Hela Hass (first from left), Lonek Kudler and Gerda Jarosz at the Morskie Oko lake in the Tatras. We are at the Akiba camp. The picture was taken in the 1930s.

When I was 12, 13 years old I went to camp for the first time. I went to camps with Akiba, perhaps once with Hanoar. With Akiba I used to go to Banska Wyzyna, near Zakopane.

My parents didn't like this very much. They had to pay, it was expensive. But I always somehow managed to convince them. Once, I don't think they let me go, so I ran away. We went hiking in the Tatras.

I remember we would always go to Zakopane at night and then hiking in the mountains. We practically slept while walking, we were so tired. Each hike would always last several days. We ate whatever was available, mamalyga, we slept wherever we could, on some straw.

I once climbed Kasprowy Wierch, one of the highest peaks in the Tatra Mountains. I climbed using these buckles and chains. Well, there were also these raids of the Polish scouts. And we would raid their camp as well.

We kept watch, guarded our camp in Zywiec. We were afraid that these scouts would take our flag.

The last camp was organized by Akiba in 1939. Several hundred people went hiking in the Tatras, because young people from all over Poland gathered there. I didn't take part in that hike, I must have been feeling ill.

It was a tragic hike, because lightning struck a rock and seven people, including the guide, who was a very handsome boy, fell off the cliff, into the precipice.

He lived in Nowy Targ. His name was Heniek Jaffe, he was slim, tall, blond, he had blue eyes. I remember the despair of those parents who were waiting at the train station in Cracow.

It was August, we had just gotten home when the war broke out on 1st September and the tragic camp was forgotten.