

Samuel Eiferman As A Child



This photo was taken in our village in 1938, when I was 13. I was sitting on a chair in the photographer's cabinet. Our village had its own photographer. His name was Ireciuk and he was Ukrainian. I was a pupil at the time.

The village was too small to have a kindergarten, so all the children were brought up at home until they were old enough to go to school. The school was located up on a hill and consisted of seven grades. When I entered the 1st grade I could speak German, Ukrainian and Polish, but I couldn't speak Romanian, so I had to learn it in school. We were taught by two Jews - a schoolmaster and a schoolmistress. I forgot their names. I later met them in the camp. I started going to school at the age of 7 and I attended 7 primary grades. Classes were taught in Romanian. The teachers were Romanians who had been brought from the Kingdom, since our village only had Ukrainians. There were one female teacher and two male teachers. The men's names were Cozma and Lefter. I can't remember the lady's name though. Both men were reservists, wore "pre-military" uniforms and service caps and conducted drills with the boys aged 18-19 in order to prepare them for the military service. Teachers weren't the only professionals who had to be "imported" from elsewhere; it was the same for priests. The pupils wore whatever their parents could afford. Some were dressed in traditional outfits; others had watchmen's uniforms [4]. After the Russians invaded Bukovina, classes were taught in Russian. In 1940-1941, we completed 7 grades in one year. I actually enjoyed the stories and the poems of the Russian authors.

I didn't want to learn Hebrew. We were two Jewish boys in school and were supposed to study Hebrew, but, being a couple of spoiled brats, we said no. Our parents didn't force us. And this is why I never got to learn Hebrew.

I really can't remember whether I had my bar mitzvah or not. We were already living in Braila when two Jews who had come from America put those sacred scrolls called tefillin on my forehead and on

my left arm and read to me in Hebrew, while I repeated after them. I suppose that was it.

As a kid, my favorite pass time was playing with the ball and hiking in the mountains in summer, and sleighing and skiing in winter. The skis were made of beech by our village carpenters. The sleigh was essential, due to our long winters that lasted from September to May. We would go hiking in summer, during our training as watchmen. In 1938 we even received the visit of Minister Sidorovici, accompanied by some 8 cars. [Ed. note: While the King was the watchmen's supreme commander, Maj. Teofil Sidorovici was his lieutenant, as executive commander of the Watchmen's Guard. On 28 June 1941 he was appointed minister of national propaganda, a short-lived office which he held until 3 July of the same year.] Back in those days, Romanians paid special attention to the territories that used to belong to Austria-Hungary. We, the watchmen, would often serve as guides for the groups of tourists that came from the Kingdom. We took them hiking in the mountains for as much as 7-10 kilometers.