

## Zoltan Blum With His Wife, Rozalia



This is me Zoltan Blum and my wife Rozalia in our kitchen, in the house from Gherla, where we are living since 1962.

Here's how I met my wife. I had come back from the army to Fizesul Gherlei, but there were no Jewish girls in the village anymore.

As you can imagine, back then, it was considered a shame for a Jew to marry someone who wasn't Jewish.

There were cases of Jews marrying Christian girls, but they were very rare. Nevertheless, I didn't find the thought of spending my entire life alone appealing at all.

So I found me a Christian girl. Her name was Rozalia, nee Hideg.

She was born on 16 September 1933 in Fizesul Gherlei. Hungarian was her native tongue. One of her uncles was a neighbor of ours and that's how I met her.

After courting her properly, I asked her if she wanted to marry me. She said yes. She had no income.

As for me, thanks to my trade, I did have nice clothes, but that was it - I had no fortune. So I told her: 'Take a good look at me and think it over. I have nothing except the house where I grew up.' She was poor too, but that didn't matter.

We went to the mayor's office and got married. We didn't have a religious ceremony because it's not allowed for a Jew [in case of a mixed marriage]. We got married in 1952. We've been together for 53 years now.

Our only daughter, Berta, was born in 1955. She went to college in Bucharest and got a degree in economic cybernetics. She is not 'officially' Jewish - according to the Jewish tradition, you are a Jew only if your mother is Jewish.

However, we registered her as Jewish in school. She now lives and works in Oradea. She's married to Francisc, a man who has both Romanian and Hungarian origins.

Her surname as a married woman is Marian. They both have decent jobs, but they're not rich or anything... My daughter thinks of herself as Jewish.

We didn't wish to leave for Israel, unlike many Jews who emigrated. Ludovic - a cousin from Iosif's side - was among them. They kept leaving.

Commerce was on the verge of a crisis - and most of the Jews had been involved in commerce.

People began to face all sorts of shortages and Jews were the first who took the blame. We felt that we didn't belong here anymore. Some hesitated to leave because of their children, who had been raised here.

But the same children also gave them a pretty good reason to leave - because there was no future for them here anymore.

Besides, many Jews wanted to keep the faith alive and were aware that interethnic marriages would cause the faith to fade away... [Editor's note:

With the Jewish population dramatically diminishing, religious Jews thought it was a moral duty to emigrate to Israel in order to avoid interethnic marriages.]

So I was left alone [without his brother and his brother's friend]. I just didn't go and that's that! No point in discussing this. Before, we weren't allowed to bury goyim in our cemetery.

But look at people like my wife and me: we've been together for so many years. So the rabbinate gave a decree that allowed it. Apart from that, the Jewish religion is still very strict.

If it weren't so, it would vanish. I don't mean to sound patriotic or something - I'm just a country boy who never got further than 7th grade -, but here it goes: when you think of all the religions that disappeared over the centuries, you can't but wonder at how the Jewish faith survived - even scattered in the four corners of the world.