

Ladislav Roth



I at my home. This photo was taken in Uzhgorod during the interview in 2003.

In 1953 I got a job offer to work in the biggest and most prestigious restaurant and hotel in Uzhhorod: Verkhovina ['high hill area' in Ukrainian] At first I worked there as a waiter and then I became an administrator. I didn't like this administration job and I went to work as bartender. There were few other employees working in Verkhovina before the war when it was called Korona [Hungarian: Crown]. My colleagues treated me with respect. I worked there until I retired in 1990. Although I wasn't a Party member, in 1955 I became chairman of the trade union unit of the

Verkhovina hotel and I held this position till I retired. There were over 200 employees there.

I never faced anti-Semitism since I didn't look like a Jew and at work they valued me high: I never had financial problems or they never saw me drunk at work. I never allowed myself to have one gram of alcohol at work, though I worked with alcohol. I started work during the Czech rule when one could only cheat once and then nobody would have employed him. It was unacceptable for me and they valued me for this.

Whenever I had free time I tried to spend it with my family. We liked walking in Uzhhorod and going to the park, spending time on the outskirts of Uzhhorod and hiking in the mountains. I also spent summer vacations with my family. We went to the Crimea, Caucasus and the Black Sea. We enjoy spending time together. Even when the children grew up and had their own families they went on vacations with us. At home my wife and I spoke Hungarian and sometimes Russian.

After Subcarpathia came under the Soviet rule I didn't observe Jewish traditions. The only Jewish tradition that I could observe was charity. It was always an important part of Jewish life and my parents taught me to do charity when I was a child. Jews always helped those who had a more difficult life. I knew three old Jews who knew our family before the war. They returned from work battalions and their families perished in work battalions. Every Friday those three old men came to my work and I gave them money. My wife and I helped them with food products and this lasted until they died.

I have attended the synagogue for only last five years. On Friday I go there alone and then my grandson comes to take me home. I also celebrate holidays in Hesed. Of course, this is my tribute to traditions since I haven't become religious, but I try to take part in the Jewish life and Jewish community. I've always identified myself as a Jew and have been proud of it. My son, grandson and great grandson also attend Hesed. When I ask my 6-year-old great grandson to say 'Hallo' to me he shouts with joy 'Shalom'. And when I ask him who he is Andrash says proudly: 'Jew!'.