

Arnold Leinweber In Boy Scouts Camp



This was taken in Bugaz [currently Zatoka in Ukraine], in a boy scouts camp in 1936. The tuberculosis sanitarium is visible in the background. In the upper row, from left to right: Commander Tanasescu, Zoreanu, Iacomi (the one with the white hat), Chiritescu, Blagoi; the last one on the right, the smaller one, is Dumitrescu (who is now a doctor at the Panduri Hospital). In the lower row, from left to right: Arnold Leinweber and Popovici (in a symmetrical position). I was born in Bucharest on 12th August 1920. At 16, my school sent me to the seaside [by the Black Sea]. I was sent there three times. The third time, the reason was the good job I had done as head of my group at school, which determined the camp's commander, doctor Dumitrescu, to call us there. I saw the place where the Dniester River flows into the sea [currently on Ukrainian soil]. The water there was clearer than a spring's, and the beach was very wide, with sand dunes in which the foot would sink. When we had to return to the camp at noon, after having frolicked for hours, we couldn't walk, but we had to run like crazy to reach the ground, because the sand was too hot to walk on. Another nice thing about that place were some very small mollusks in the sea, which died once they were thrown on the shore. In the evening, we would walk on the shore and find phosphorescent lights - the sea was full of shiny little stars. My boy scout's hat had a sort of lyre-shaped lily on it. I would put these small crawfish on it, and my hat would glow in the dark. I enjoyed scouting very much. We slept in tents. The tent was partly buried in the sand, so that the wind wouldn't blow it away and the tide wouldn't drag it to the sea. Some ropes tied it to stakes. There were pretty tall weeds growing there, and we used them to make the base of our tent. We put the tent sheet over it, we stuffed the pillows with weeds, and this was our bedroom. I stayed with the other two heads of groups in a tent of three. Others stayed in tents of six, eight or ten. One day we were playing with a brick that was thrown in the water. The one who found it had the right to throw it further away, and the others had to look for it. Eventually, all my companions got bored, so I continued to play on my own. The current began to drag me towards the Dniester. As it was growing stronger and the water was getting deeper, I was getting tired. I was swimming towards the shore, but was not succeeding in getting away from the current. In that desperate moment, when I was facing death, I remembered that one of the boys, Tache, had said before a

bonfire: 'The current is a lot less strong at the bottom!' So I dived to the bottom and started swimming. From time to time, I surfaced to breathe, and then I dived back. It took me an eternity to get to the shore. I just lay there for a while, to regain my powers. The following year, I could swim much better, as I was already a grown-up, and I raced for kilometers. My last swimming race was in Neptun, about two years before my retirement [1978]. I haven't seen the sea since then. I am a great fan of nature; I miss it and yearn for it. I couldn't say that I can easily afford it - but our legs and hearts can't stand this harmful air for much longer.