

Emanuel And Marie Novak



This is a photograph of Emanuel and Marie Novak - the grandfather and grandmother of my husband, Karel Rutar. I never knew my husband's grandparents. This picture was taken in Prague in 1914. Life is full of coincidences; Karel was actually almost the first man that I saw in Terezin! But I barely knew him; I'd seen him only in passing and didn't pay any attention to him at all. You see, in the beginning in Terezin we were staying with some family named Polak. Once Mrs. Polak said that their niece Hana and her husband Karel were coming to visit them. When I saw them, I remember being taken aback that they were married, because they were awfully young. The way it went back then was that people tried to get married before the transport, so that they could live together. I didn't pay any particular heed to Karel in Terezin, all I knew was that he'd then gone to work in Wulkov ? he was quite handy, and had worked as a carpenter in Terezin. After the war I found out that he'd been the head carpenter, and that some problem had happened there that he didn't cause, but they punished him for being the boss and letting it happen. The SS soldier punished him by making him go outside at night, in the winter, naked, and pouring cold water on him. He then gave him such a slap that it punctured his eardrum, and for the rest of his life Karel was hard of hearing in one ear. From Wulkov he returned to Terezin, where after the war he recuperated, and then brought with him to Prague many materials ? correspondence cards, on which you could send a maximum of thirty words to Terezin, maps, and a picture painted for him by the caricaturist Haas, brother of the actor Hugo Haas. His wife Hanka and I had worked in the ?Landwirtschaft? together, although she then got typhus, so then no longer came to work. Karel's sister Ela and his mother were murdered in Auschwitz.