

Max Sternschein With His Wife



This is my uncle, Max Sternschein with his wife, Suzi. They made a very elegant and beautiful couple, many people admired them, even in the street. Uncle Max had been to Berlin when he was younger, to his sister Grete, and learnt artistic photography, so when he came back to Cernauti he opened a studio that became well known among the ballerinas and actresses of the time, he had a very good reputation. It was too long ago to remember his studio very well, but I remember it was always crowded, probably because he was so well known. He was married to Aunt Suzi, as we kids used to call her, and he had two children: Ani and Vili Sternschein. During the war, uncle Max and his family were among the few Jews who were allowed to stay in Cernauti; I think he got a permit which he paid with everything he had to be able to stay behind. When the Russians came, in 1940, Ani had just finished high school, she had passed her graduation exam. And Russians imposed that everybody who had graduated from high school was to go to Bessarabia to teach there. Uncle Max was desperate, but he couldn't do anything. So he married Ani in a hurry with a medicine student, one of her pretenders, so that she wouldn't be all alone and with no protection there. But the German front came, and they were massacred there, they weren't heard of again. He was still hoping to hear from Ani, his daughter. Uncle Max sent people to look for them, my mother kept asking everybody who went to or was coming from Bessarabia, and the answer was always the same: no Jews were left alive. Uncle Max had a very hard time accepting this, he adored his daughter. Soon after the war, Uncle Max left for Buenos Aires because his wife, Suzi, had relatives there, and of course they left with Vili. Uncle Max died there some time in the late 1950s, I think. I wanted to keep in touch with their son, Vili, I even contacted the Red Cross who gave me his address, I wrote him a letter, but he never replied. I know he got married to a Jewish woman, a pharmacist, who left from Transylvania with her family. He became a diamond polisher there.