

Jan Sokal's Father Natan Sokal



This is my Father - Natan Sokal as a soldier of the army of Austria-Hungary during World War I. The photo was taken probably in the 1910's but I don't know where.

My father probably came from somewhere in the vicinity of Rawa Ruska, small town ca. 120km north-east of Przemysl, today in Ukraine. I can only suspect he was born in 1860. No one in our family was keeping such a calendar, right. He was a normally shaved, cropped man. I have never seen him having a beard. Father was a townsman. He worked until year 1928. He was a hired employee in a certain beer wholesale firm, right. He was a collector. He would travel with a carter and a load of beer and would distribute the beer to restaurants, and it was his job. During those times it was a relatively well paid job. I suppose so, but having such a big family wasn't easy. And later, during that time when our family went into financial troubles, he lost his job. Father, I remember, liked to smoke a lot. He kept smoking until the end of his life. He apparently started to smoke before the war, when he was working in a propinacja - a sales of vodkas. Father was not a drunkard, right. No! But he did not scorn from alcohol. When he used to work, I remember him, he would return home frozen in winter, in the kitchen he had such 'tens', small liquor-glasses, 10ml, like a thimble, and he would drink one.

Father was a good expert in the history of the Jewish nation and religious matters. He had knew a rabbi, and Father attended his services. The rabbi's name was Herszel. When I was very young I was there with my father several times, lead by the hand. It was just an apartment, and people used to come there. There was a man who had rabbinical, national knowledge. And Father was

respected by him, too. Because my father was strong in that knowledge. He knew it through and through, right. That's how we used to say, in our family. And he used to live in accordance to that religious knowledge. All the holidays that existed he would go to pray. I remember, as long as I was at home, since later I flew away too, he was observant of that, but he was normal. As normal civilized people are dressed, same about him he did not distinguish himself. He knew the Polish language very well.

My parents were not politically engaged. Absolutely not. They had no interest in that. Well, Father sometimes looked at the literature my brothers had. But my father was a man who had broader horizons.

He died probably in 1938. I was already in Cracow back then.