

Mochiu Rotaru



This is my father, Mochiu Rotaru, photographed in 1949.

My father's name was Mochiu Rotaru, but they called him Marcu in the family. He was born in Saveni on 7th September 1910. My father finished elementary school. That's about all the education a child coming from a poor family could get in those days. Thus, my father finished the four elementary grades. Then he worked with my grandfather - his father - in his workshop, as a blacksmith. Afterwards, he started an apprenticeship in a shop. There was a manufacture shop right there, in Saveni - a manufacture in those days was a shop where they sold fabrics, cloth, accessories for clothes, for tailoring. Well, he worked there for several years. In the beginning, he was basically the owner's servant for the first two or three years; he took care of the owner's children - he took them to and from school - he did the shopping for the shop owner's wife. I'll admit, employers in these small towns were not great businessmen or what not, but compared to the rest of the people they were wealthy.

My parents met as was the custom in those days - through matchmaking. They married in 1937, my father was 27 and my mother was 29. Neither my father, nor my mother received any dowry. My mother saved money and bought a sewing machine. My father saved some money so he could buy some merchandise, and that's how they started their life together.

They moved to the countryside, in Hanesti, my mother's native village, and my father opened a small food shop in Hanesti using the money he saved from the salary he received at the manufacture where he was apprenticed and the experience he gathered while working there. They rented a house close to the village center. That's where the shop was, too, and they sold food

products. Actually, these shops resembled general stores: there were food products, a few kilograms of nails and a bucket, and anything else you could sell to country folk. You see, there weren't many shops back then. And my mother worked as a dressmaker for the villagers. And just when they started to make ends meet the war was upon them...

At the beginning of 1941 my father - together with the rest of the Jewish men in the village - was called up, drafted and taken to a forced labor camp. He was summoned to the military headquarters in Saveni, as men are called up for military service, with a suit of clothes, and was taken to Transnistria, which was occupied by Romanian troops at that time. And he was taken to build strategic roads in that area. He wasn't wearing a military outfit, meaning he hadn't been called up to do his military service - that is called a military call-up - he was taken as a civilian. It was about March 1944 when my father returned home, for some time passed between the closing of the construction site and their arrival back home.