

Jaroslav Smolka



This is a photo from the Jewish birth registry, which was located at the Jewish community in Prague at 18 Maiselova Street, on the second floor. All of these people are employees of the registry; my husband is the one in the back, in the middle with a tie. They were terribly busy, because after the war no one had ID and everyone used to come there for documents. The photo could be from about 1948. My husband was named Jaroslav Smolka. He was born in Bernatice in Southern Bohemia in 1900. We met on the street in Prague after the war, but we'd already known each other from Terezin, because his brother had married Uncle Viktor's first wife. Jaroslav graduated from high school in Pisek and continued his studies at the University of Economics in Prague. He had his first final exam, when in 1925 his father died. So Jaroslav returned, to take care of his mother and take over his father's business. His father had still made his rounds to the farmers on foot, to offer them farm machinery. Jaroslav already had a motorcycle. He always told me about how he wished that he wouldn't have to make a living in this way after the war, basically in the role of a supplicant, greatly dependent on how the harvest would end up, and if he would get paid in the end. He said that he'd be a civil servant after the war, which also happened. It took about six years before we were married. My husband was afraid of the large age difference, but for me, at the age of 21, it didn't matter at all. All my life I had actually gravitated towards older people, from the time I was little I was around older people. So for years we lived separately. In 1949 the Jewish community decided that it would turn a building in Siroka Street in Prague, where it had offices, into apartments for its employees. Unfortunately only for those that lived somewhere and could offer their own apartment in exchange. But my husband was renting, and I was living with Aunt Gusti. A friend of his helped him, who worked at the community and together with Mr. Gutig administered the Jewish community's real estate. In the neighboring building in Siroka Street he found a laundry room right at the top in the attic, and they had it converted to an apartment, which was then given to Jaroslav. I live here to this day. Our wedding took place in 1954. We didn't have any children, both of us worked very hard, so we divided up the household chores. We had a beautiful relationship. At the beginning of our life together my husband said to me: 'I've got two requests. We'll never argue, and we'll never be without bread at home, because I don't want to be without

bread ever again.' We really never argued, and I'd say that in time we melded to the degree that one actually didn't exist without the other. My husband was somewhat similar to my father in that he preferred spending his free time with me, and didn't need to associate with other people. He also read a lot, like my father. He respected the fact that one day a week my aunt would come visit us, and that we would visit her once a week. He liked my sister, who lived in Teplice, but occasionally came here to visit, and we would visit her too.