

Iosif And Tily Seidenberg



These are my maternal grandparents, Iosif and Tily Seidenberg (nee Sloser). The picture was taken in the 1920s at their home in Valea Rea, Bacau county, probably by a travelling photographer. My grandmother holds in her left hand a photo probably of a dead close relative.

My mother's father was born in Sascut or in Adjud - in any case, that's the region where he came from. He was born in 1855. He became an orphan at a very early age. He got married in Bacau

County. He first lived in Helegiu for a few years, and then he moved to Valea Rea [Ed. note: Both localities are in Bacau County.], which is called Livezile today. We saw him quite seldom. He had six children. He ran a kosher butcher's shop located in the same courtyard where his house was. He was a butcher by trade; this is what he did his entire life. He went to the army because they caught him and drafted him against his will - he was a sturdy fellow, and so were all the members of our family. My maternal grandfather wore ordinary clothes and he was a very handsome man! Of course, he was religious too, he observed the tradition. He wasn't into politics either, and I don't know what his preferences were, because I was only a child back then. His native tongue was Yiddish, and he also spoke Romanian. I don't know what school he went to, but he could read and write. He was an evolved person, he read the newspaper all the time and he understood the political arena. My other grandfather, the paternal one, wasn't quite like that. He read too, but he was caught into Jewish books most of the time.

In Valea Rea, Jews lived on one side of the Tazlau River, and the [Christian] Orthodox - on the other one. There was also a landowner there, who had his mansion on the Christians' street. The Jews in Valea Rea were from the middle class and there were no great differences between them. My grandparents got along well with their neighbors. My grandfather was very sociable; he would tell an occasional joke and would have a laugh once in a while - he was different [from the paternal grandfather, who was very austere]. The house of my maternal grandparents had two rooms and a large kitchen; they spent most of their day in the kitchen, where they also ate, and they slept in one of the rooms.

My maternal grandmother had been to school. Wherever there were Jews, there was a small school where children could learn their ABC's. She was a housewife. Her native tongue was Yiddish, but she could speak Romanian too. She wore ordinary clothes. She was very, very religious - nothing from the outside would make it inside my grandmother's house, not even bread! She wouldn't buy bread from the baker's. The whole town did it, but she baked bread at home! Not to mention the baker was a Jew! So everything she ate had to be cooked in the house! She didn't even buy oil - she made it herself. She grew geese and, well, since my grandfather was a butcher, she had all the meat she needed for soups and that sort of thing. My grandmother didn't let anyone milk the cow except for herself. She was a very clean woman. When she didn't feel well - and that happened rather often, because she had problems with her health - my grandfather would say 'Let me milk the cow, don't go yourself...' - 'No way, because you don't wash your hands properly.' - 'But we boil the milk.' - 'Oh, give me a break with the milk, will you?'

My grandmother lived and died in Valea Rea. She died at an early age, around the year of 1925. I know that because, in 1925 or 1926, my aunt gave birth to a girl whom she named after my grandmother. So my grandmother died in 1925, at the age of 59 or 60. She was ill, she had a cancer. First she had a problem with an eye, and then the illness moved to her liver. She lied in bed for a long time. Her suffering lasted many years. My grandfather died in 1949, in Valea Rea, at the age of 94.