

Alexandru And Toma Kohn



This is a photo of me and my brother, Toma Nicolae, taken in the garden of our childhood house in Beliu in 1938.

My brother Toma Nicolae and I were both born in Beliu, where we lived until 1940. I was born on 19th October 1932, my brother on 16th March 1936.

My childhood home was located at a corner opposite the Catholic church. The house was actually owned by a Romanian citizen who worked in the United States, and we rented it from him. We had three rooms: a kitchen, the shop and a very nice yard with flowers. We didn't have a vegetable garden or any animals at home, only flowers. Our carpets were hand-made, manufactured by my mother. We heated with wood, as we had tile stoves in the rooms. We also had two servants, neither one of whom was Jewish. One of them worked in the kitchen, and the other helped take care of us.

When I was a child, my favorite holiday was Purim. In general I liked all the holidays however, as I could meet with my friends and it got us one more day without school. I attended the state kindergarten with other children, but I didn't manage to finish the first primary grade in Beliu because I was kicked out of school.

I sensed the rise of anti-Semitism throughout my childhood. When we went to bathe, for example, all the children would stare at me because I was circumcised. I was different from those of my age, and children had learned all kind of things at home that gave them an aversion to Jews. Walking through the village we were sometimes told, 'Hey Yid, go to Palestine!' Everything only got worse when the legionaries came in the 1930s. In Beliu, a lawyer and the priest from a neighboring

village were the leaders of the local legionary grouping. From 1938 onwards there was an anti-Jewish atmosphere throughout the area, and many Jews realized that it wouldn't be good for Jews.