Herman Beitner In The German Army During World War I



This is a picture of my father, Herman Beitner, when he was in the German Army during World War I. I don’t know who the other soldiers are. Father is standing fourth from the right. The photo was taken in Hammerstein, Germany, in 1915.

I remember how Mother told me that she waited seven years, because during World War I Father was in the German Army. He only married my mother after he was discharged from the army. So he was in the army between 1914 and 1918, and I think they got married in 1919, because my brother, Natan, was born in 1921 and I was born in 1922. I don't know where they got married, I don't remember any photographs from my parents' wedding. It wasn't then like it is now, you didn't invite hundreds of guests and throw huge parties. It was all more modest.

It's very likely that the families of my parents met through business - these hardware stores. There was a double marriage between two families. First Tobiasz, my father's brother, married Mania, Mother's sister. And at this wedding my mother must have met Tobiasz's brother. They must have fallen in love, but somehow Mother never talked about it. Those were families who hardly made ends meet. That's what I think.

After the wedding my parents went to Magdeburg. There was a painful economic crisis in Poland and that's why Father went to Germany looking for work. I think it must have been 1920. He worked at his sister's store. She had a shoe store. Her name was Ida Oppenheim, her husband, Natan Oppenheim, was, I think, a German Jew. Or maybe he was from Poland? I don't know where they met, but I do know they only spoke German to each other. They were more progressive, reformed. We were both born in Magdeburg: my brother Natan and I.