

Avram Cojocariu



This is my father, Avram Cojocariu. He was younger here, he was healthy and doing well. He was born in 1898 in Dumeni, the place where his parents lived.

My parents got married in 1923. They met here, in Dorohoi, but I don't know the circumstances, they didn't tell us. My father probably came to the city to get married at some point, and he met my mother. They got married while he was doing his military service, that's what they told us. My father did his military service in Iasi, and they lived there, my mother lived in Iasi as well during my father's military service. It could be that my father's military service lasted for 3 years - the military service was very long in those days. And our father told us how his officers loved him during the days of his military service - those people, the toffs, his superiors -, and how they cared for him.

And when my father finished his military service, they moved back to Dorohoi. They paid rent, and when my father went to rent a place, the owner would ask: "Do you have any children?" "Yes." That was it, they wouldn't want him anymore, they didn't rent him the room anymore. "Do you have any children?" "And how many children do you have?" - That was it! And that's how they kept going from place to place. Until my father set his mind to building a place of his own, so that he wouldn't have to pay other people anymore. And he obtained a narrow plot of land somewhere - as wide as the house, no wider -, for I don't know how they worked on building the house. So he secured a small plot of land, and paid a contractor to build the house. It was located near the train station, on a street that was once called Carmen Silva, formerly; it was called Republicii St. lately, and now it is called George Enescu. For the George Enescu Museum is located on that street as well, and they named the street George Enescu as well.

We had fowl at home, my father raised fowl - hens, ducks. As for slaughtering them, my mother took them to the hakham - that man who slaughters the fowl -, or it was my father who took them

there. In the old days, the hakham even came at our house to slaughter the fowl, for there were many hakhamim here, in Dorohoi. I never looked when they slaughtered the fowl - I don't want to see the fowl being killed. We had very many hakhamim here, in our town, we had many rabbies - there aren't any left anymore.

My father observed the Seder Nacht at home: he donned a tallit, and he read the Haggadah in Hebrew, he recited prayers. The celebration was prepared beautifully, with wine, with everything that is necessary. You don't eat matzah during the first evening, you aren't allowed to taste it. Even nowadays they still say that you aren't allowed to eat matzah on the first evening. You are only allowed to eat boiled potatoes, horseradish, and parsley roots - something like that. And eggs, I think. But I think they said you aren't allowed to eat meat on the first evening. The first evening was like a sort of fast. And on the second evening we ate matzah, and other, more varied dishes. On Seder Nacht we all had a glass on the table, and father gave wine to each child. I couldn't tell you any details about the questions the father is asked [mah nishtanah] or about the opening of the door [waiting for the prophet Elijah]...

Father didn't lie on pillows. I seem to remember it is the rabbi who has to lie on the pillows. After World War II, when they celebrated Seder Nacht at the canteen of the Community, and rabbi Wasserman attended as well, he was dressed in white, he was wearing something resembling a robe - it appears that is the custom on Passover -, and I remember there was a white pillow for him to lie on. [Editor's note: Mrs Cojocariu is referring here to the ritual of leaning. At several points during the Seder, participants lean to the left - when drinking the four cups of wine, eating the Afikoman etc. This ritual is associated with freedom. In ancient times only free people had the luxury of reclining while eating.]