

Matilda Cerge's Granduncle Jakov Kalef And Friends



Here is Jakov Kalef (on the right), the brother of my paternal grandmother Matilda Kalef, with some of his friends. We called Jakov "Uncle Grandfather" because our grandfather had died and Jakov was the male head of our extended family. This photo was taken in the S. Mojsilovic studio in Belgrade in 1902. Despite all the tragedies that she encountered in life - a paralyzed son, the loss of two sons and a husband - my grandmother fought. She was the pillar of the family. She rented out the family apartments and maintained the stores. Her older brother, Granduncle Jakov, helped her. We lived right next to each other, number three and number five Gospodar Jovanova. He took care of her and our family. It was as if he was our grandfather. Granduncle Jakov was on the board of the Jewish community. He was a cantor in the synagogue. Granduncle was involved in Jewish communal life and he kept my father and grandmother informed about everything. Because we were like one family and he was the head of the family. In fact, Jakov and Grandmother were the heads. My granduncle Jakov was one of the main people on the board of the Jewish community. He worked a lot, he was very involved. I know that he got a decoration, a medal, but I don't know what kind or what it was for. He got it from the King. [Editor's note: It isn't known which king presented it to him, or if it was at all presented by a member of a royal family.] He even went to the palace. When King Petar was young, 16 or 17 years old, they gathered kids his age from different families and once a week they went to play with him, to socialize with him. My cousin David Kalef always participated in playing with King Petar. I think the family must have had very high standing, if this was allowed.