

Albert Eskenazi



This is me in Slavonski Brod (Croatia), 1930. I was the most beautiful baby in Slavonski Brod. I was born in Slavonski Brod because at the time my parents lived in Bosanski Brod, where there was no maternity hospital, so they moved to my grandmother's and lived there (Bosanski Brod is on the Bosnian side of the Sava River; Slavonski Brod lies on the other bank and is in Croatia). That is how I came to be born in the hospital in Slavonski Brod, and then my sister 16 months later. Today, when I want to joke with Bosnians, I tell them that I am not a Bosnian. A large bridge spanning the Sava River separates me from Bosnia. You are on one side, and I am on the other in Slavonia, a Slavonian. Life and circumstances made it so that I do not even remember my birth place, as I was

not even two years old when we moved to Zagreb. I saw Slavonski Brod for the first time when I was thirty-six years old. I went to Slavonski Brod with my mother and she showed me where she used to walk with me in my carriage, and where we lived. I do not remember what our house looked like, but I know that the street was called Trenk. Trenk Street exists today, named after a Croatian baron, Trenk. Even though my mother told me the number I cannot remember it. Because of the fate of war, when we fled Zagreb in 1942, for Mostar, I had to go through Slavonski Brod and Sarajevo. We spent a whole night at the station waiting for the train in Slavonski Brod. At the time the train from Slavonski Brod to Sarajevo was narrow gauge which was later done away with. I spent the whole night at the station and did not manage to see it. My grandfather was Abraham Eskenazi and I am named Abraham, after him. Later we changed that to Albert. During my life they called me this at home, however, in my first certificate from the Jewish elementary school in Zagreb my name was written Abraham Eskenazi. When I was in the first grade of the gymnasium, my Serbian language teacher, who liked me very much, when he would ask the other students a question and they did not know the answer he would then say: 'Let's go Abraham, child of God'. Otherwise, no one ever called me Abraham not during my childhood nor later in life. When I emigrated to Mostar and Rab, my fellow Bosnian sufferers called me Albi. This was only for a short time, otherwise I was always Albert. When I came back to Yugoslavia from Israel I had a problem with the authorities, so I officially changed my name from Abraham to Albert. I entered a request with all the details, because in my birth certificate it said Abraham Eskenazi. They told me that Albert and Abraham are not the same. But, I told them that I am now called Albert, and not Abraham. Despite that they told me I need to enter an official request, and to prove that I am not under investigation or being sued. It was resolved that they would allow me to continue using the personal name Albert, but Abraham remained written in the registry.