

Leo Greif



This man is Leo Greif, my father-in-law. He is wearing the Austro-Hungarian uniform, so this photo must have been taken during World War I. I don't think he fought, though, he was a pharmacist and he was needed behind the front lines. But I have no idea where the photo was taken. My father-in-law had owned, along with an associate, an ethyl chloroform plant in Cernauti. My father-in-law was a very hard-working man; for example, he didn't take a vacation for ten years. He was that busy with the plant; he only sent his wife and his son to Vatra Dornei [spa region located in Bistritei Mountains, in Suceava county] or Karlsbad in Czechoslovakia. He and his family suffered a lot during World War II, but they had a bit of luck as well because the Russians needed the plant, so he and his family were only taken to the ghetto in Cernauti, not to Transnistria. When the Germans came, he was still in trouble. Every time a German was shot, the authorities would take hostage some of the important people in Cernauti; he was taken from his house as he was, his wife only had time to throw him a blanket from the balcony as he was being taken away. They were very worried; a lot of time passed since he went missing and nobody knew where he was. When he came back, he was forced to move out of his house and leave everything there, and share a miserable house with several other families. That's why they came to Romania when they could, in 1946. When my parents-in-law moved from Cernauti to Romania, they knew nationalization would follow, so they wanted to invest all their money in something: they bought an old house, which also had lodgers. Among other things, my father-in-law invented a recipe for bitter, bitter which gave me quite a big surprise one day in 2000. I was walking down one of the main streets of Brasov, and in front of a fancy and classy bar, Festival 39, I saw a plate outside with his signature, Leo Greif. He used to manufacture it in his laboratory and sell it while he still worked. I could recognize it among a thousand others, so I went inside and talked to the owner. Apparently, he was serving for free to every customer who entered his bar a Leo Greif bitter. And he asked me to give him something personal of Leo Greif if I had anything. I did and gave him a few old IDs. You can still find this bar, which is full of old pictures, and you can see Leo Greif's photos there if you ask for someone to show them to you. He died in 1966 and he was buried in the Jewish cemetery here, in Brasov.