

Elvira Kohn With Her Maternal Grandparents And Cousins



This is a photo of my maternal grandparents, my cousins and me.

My grandfather, Leopold Klein is the man standing with the hat. To his right side is my grandmother, Rozalija Klein, nee Weiss, and standing next to my grandmother is Zlata Ruzic, my the younger daughter of my aunt Tereza Ruzic, nee Weiss.

To the left of my grandfather is me, and next to me is my aunt Tereza's older daughter, Zdenka Ruzic. The young boys are my uncle Samuel Klein's sons, Mirko and Vlado.

We are standing in the backyard of the house where my grandparents, my mother and I lived. My brother was already dead when this picture was taken.

It was winter, and it was snowing. Zdenka and I were a bit older than the others so we didn't play much with them, but Zlata, Mirko and Vlado enjoyed playing in the snow in our backyard.

My grandfather Leopold had a store in Vinkovci. It was a grocery where you could get sugar, flour, bread, milk, and other food products. It wasn't a very large store, but it had a variety of food products, and household goods were sold there, too.

My grandfather completed some kind of vocational school; it was obligatory to finish that kind of school in order to obtain a permit to open a grocery. My grandfather himself worked in the store and there was one employee.

The store was open on Saturdays but my grandfather didn't work on Saturdays since he always went to the synagogue then. It was always the other worker, a non-Jew, who worked in the store on Saturdays.

My grandfather was a big joker, and I think I inherited that from him. He was always in a good mood, always smiling and happy, just like I am. He was very interested in stars and astronomy, and was very curious how stars and the sun evolved.

I remember he had this one book, very old and already yellow, written by some prophet about what will happen. It was some kind of prophetic book, not Jewish I think, but still he was preoccupied with what was written in there.

He gathered us children and read out loud from the book. I don't remember what was written in this book, but I remember that my grandfather was very much preoccupied with astronomy, which interested him very much.

Grandmother Rozalija completed the obligatory elementary school and was literate, but she was a housewife. At that time, it was usual for a woman to be a housewife and not to work.

My grandmother was a hard-working woman, a provident and caring housewife, a mother and a grandmother, and an excellent cook. She was a kind and gentle woman.

My mother's older brother Samuel Klein had two sons: Mirko and Vlado. Vlado died of illness in Vinkovci before the war, and Mirko was murdered in Jasenovac when he was 15 years old. They were very sweet boys.

My mother's sister Tereza married a Jew named Marko Ruzic; Marko was murdered in Jasenovac in 1942. They had two daughters: Zlata and Zdenka.

Zlata moved to Dubrovnik before the war started and worked as a hairdresser. During the war, she was taken to the camp Feramonti in Italy but she survived. After the war, Zlata went to live in Israel where she stayed until her death five years ago.

Zdenka was married to a Jew who was murdered in Jasenovac. She was taken with my grandparents and her mother Tereza to Stara Gradiska in 1942.

Zdenka was pregnant when they arrived in the camp. When Ustasha men saw that she was pregnant, they killed her, opened her womb, took the child out and put stones inside.