

## Gavril Marcuson In His Biker's Uniform



This character is me, Gavril Marcuson, wearing a biker's uniform. The photo was taken in the 1920's, in the proximity of the Baneasa Woods, in the Bucharest. neighborhood. I was busy reading, exercising, biking - I was member of a biking club. There was a well-known, top quality printing house on Uranus St. It was called 'Maravan', and all its workers were biking enthusiasts. They had founded the 'Maravan' Biking Club, which I joined. Our rival was the 'Prince Nicholas' Biking Club. At the end of the week I used to go biking on Kiseleff Dr., where I would meet other bikers from 'Maravan' or from 'Prince Nicholas'. We would bike together to Ploiesti, or in the direction of Oltenita or Giurgiu. We would cover several scores of kilometers on the highway in one day. I usually stayed in Bucharest during my vacations as a child. I remember I once went to Sinaia,

which I enjoyed a lot. My father once took me to the seaside [at the Black Sea] for a few days. Back then, Mamaia [one of today's major Romanian seaside resorts] was a totally primitive place and the beach only had some wooden shacks. Another time I went to visit a sister of my mother's who lived in Botosani, and I spent my entire vacation there. In Bucharest, I would go to the stadium of the National Academy of Physical Education, which wasn't far from our home. I would run or jump, but, most of the time, I sat and looked at the athletes who were training. I had a very introverted temperament. My vacation was a sort of mixture of biking or athletic trials and very intense readings, which were rich for a boy my age. I was also interested in language issues, not just in literature. I could read French well - actually, very well, if I'm allowed to brag. I could read German and English. I could speak refined French, not just read it. I used to read mainly French literature, but I also read Romanian literature. These last years, I've been reading almost exclusively Romanian classic writers - from the chroniclers, the Vacaresti brothers, the pre-Eminescu poets and prose writers. I rarely open a French book. I have, of course, my favorites among the French poets too. I used to go to silent movies. Movies were divided into acts - some had eight acts, some had nine, some had ten. The longest ones had 12 acts and there was a break after each act. If the projectionist was in a hurry, he would run two acts with no stop. The audience would protest, claiming it was tiresome; today they sit in front of the silver screen for two straight hours. There was a pianist who played while the movie was showing. I remember the actors of that time, especially the comic actors - Zigotto, the most popular comedian, an American Jew, Laurel and Hardy, and Harold Lloyd, the comedian with glasses. I remember Francesca Bettini, Douglas Fairbanks senior, because there was also a Douglas junior. I liked Douglas Fairbanks because he was an adventurer, he was sturdy, he was clever, and he could beat them all. I remember Fatty, who bore this name because he was obese. Whatever Fatty said appeared written on the screen. They were all very nice, these silent comedians. I remember the first talking movie, in 1930-something.