

Eva Meislova's Father Alois Bohm



This picture was taken when my father went on a trip to Slovakia with his friend in the 1930s. Once a year my dad and his friend Svehla, who was the director of a school in Borotin, went on a longer trip, for instance to Slovakia. They spent a week hiking in the mountains. They had canes on which they put stickers of the places they had visited. My father was a businessman. He got his business license and became my grandfather's partner in the drapery shop. He wasn't religious. He didn't go to the synagogue except for Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah. My mother said that he actually withdrew from the Jewish community because they asked him for too much community tax. He smoked a lot and drank a lot of coffee, but he didn't drink alcohol. My dad was this kind of sociable Jew, his 'sport activity' was limited to visiting the coffee shop and meeting people there. I used to go for a walk on a very beautiful, long pathway through the wood on Sundays with my mum. My dad always said to my mum that he would go to the coffee shop to meet people instead and asked her to join him later. So we were walking until four o'clock in the afternoon, and afterwards she met him in the coffee shop. Our family belonged to the middle class; we were neither rich nor poor. My dad was officially the head of the family, but it was my mum who managed the house and family matters. She got a monthly salary from my dad and organized everything at home and everything concerning us, children. We lived on the first floor in an old house. We had a large apartment, three big rooms and a small one for the maid. We had a living room and a dining room with black furniture. My parents slept in the bedroom, and my brother and I in the living room. We had

electricity at home and cold running water. We warmed the water in a high-tile stove, which we used for heating. There was a coal stove for cooking in the kitchen. My dad was always cold, and I recall him reading the Prager Tagblatt leaning against the stove and warming up. During the winter we only heated one room. The apartment was rented because my mum never wanted her own apartment. We had a car, a Cabriolet Tatra. [Editor's note: Before 1939 many car factories existed in the Czech lands, the best-known were Laurin & Klement, Tatra, Jawa, Praga and Aero. Cabriolet Tatra was a car for the higher middle class.] We went on trips very often. My most favorite places were Orlik and Zvikov, where we could swim in the summer. [Orlik and Zvikov are resorts situated on the river Vltava, about 50 kilometers from Tabor.] Although my dad was born near the river he couldn't swim, and he was always running along the shore warning us to be careful not to drown. Neither my dad nor my granddad cared much about politics, and they weren't politically involved at all. My father voted for the Zivnostenska Party, but he used to say that the best 'party' is the relationship between a man and a woman. In 1939 the Germans organized raids and arrested a lot of Czech people, mainly Jews, including my dad. At first he was a prisoner in Dresden and then he was sent to Oranienburg. He was used to smoke, drink good coffee and have a good meal, so he just couldn't bear it. They were also torturing people. My dad died in Oranienburg in 1940. What was interesting was that they sent us his urn from Oranienburg along with his clothes and all his other things including his denture with a gold palate. We also got the death certificate. There was still a Jewish cemetery in Tabor so we took his remains there. Then the cemetery was liquidated and since the urn hadn't been there for a long time we were allowed to remove it and take it to a catholic cemetery. They had made a space for Jews near the cemetery wall there, and my dad's has remained there ever since.