

Otto Pollak



This is a picture of my dad Otto Pollak. I don't know where or when exactly it was taken but it had to be during World War I when he served in the Austro-Hungarian army.

My dad was born in 1884 in Klatovy. He studied law, but didn't become a lawyer. After World War I he worked as a state official in Slovakia. He was head of the revenue office and as such was constantly being transferred from place to place, so we often moved house. During World War I, my dad was enlisted in the Austro-Hungarian army. He never talked about this much, but I know that he was on the Italian Front for a while. He probably had a commission, because he was given his own orderly.

My dad went to the synagogue on the high holidays, but he wasn't devout. His mother tongue was Czech and he came from a large assimilated Czech Jewish family, so my grandfather was not too happy when my dad fell in love with my mum, a poor Hungarian Jewess.

My dad was a very proper, strict man. It was as if he had been born a state official. When we lived in Zilina, our apartment was in the very house where my dad's office was. From time to time I would go to see him in his office. He had a long desk there on which I liked to play ping pong. One day I rushed in and saw a man there who was trying to persuade my dad to join the Agrarian Party. That was the strongest party at the time, but my dad couldn't get politically involved in any major way, as he was a state official, so he was never in any party. He was an honest and incorruptible official. I heard that he was offered bribes to do things, but he always turned such things down as being completely out of the question.

My dad was strict with me at home, but after his death I came to realize how little one can ever know about other people. I know that he was very fond of me, I was everything to him and he would do anything for me, but he was never able to show it like mom did. My dad didn't cuddle me as much as mom did, but he liked it when I came up to him and sat in his lap. He had all kinds of hobbies. I remember that he enjoyed dancing and, later on, he played bridge and liked to go

fishing, especially for trout. When he was into dancing, I apparently used to get a chair ready so that he could try out his dance steps when he came home from the office. Photography was another one of his great hobbies.