

Herman Beitner



This is a studio portrait of my father, Herman Beitner. It was taken in the 1920s in Katowice, but I don't know exactly when and in what studio.

Father was calm, he was good, not talkative, very liberal towards his children, towards the world. He had blond hair, blue eyes. He had a very friendly face. He wore a suit. He had to dress properly, because he went to courts, for hearings.

In Katowice Father was a real estate manager. Private owners would ask him to manage their tenement houses. Father learned about management all on his own. He went from one house to

another collecting the rent. Some things had to be fixed.

Light bulbs exchanged, they were sometimes stolen by thieves. He met with people of different heritages, because there were all kinds of people living there: Jews, Poles, Volksdeutsche. There were quite a few so-called Silesians in Katowice.

Father used to go to court hearings, because some people wouldn't pay the rent and there were evictions. Once, during such an eviction, my father didn't go there on purpose, because he didn't want to evict that man, who was poor, had a wife and several children.

He was a Jew who lived on Mariacka Street. One of the richer Jews, Mr. Krakowski, owned that building and ordered this man to be evicted. Mr. Krakowski went there to evict him.

When he knocked on the door, that man came out with a knife and stabbed him. And then there was this headline in the newspaper, in block letters 'Jew killed a Jew.' This was a horrible ordeal for Father. And this was just before the war, I remember.