

Klara Karpati's Father, Herman Grunberg



This is my father, Herman Grunberg, in a photo taken in Budapest in the 1950s. My father, Herman Grunberg, was born in 1887. He was seven years younger than my mother. His birth name was Hirsh-Leib Grunberg. He wanted to 'magyarize' his name and went to the ministry repeatedly until he was finally given permission to change it. This could have been around 1926-27. My father told me that in his childhood he joined the fair, which came to Hungary, too. I do not know when my father came to Hungary. I do know that in 1912, when he married my mother, he had already been here in Hungary for some years. He spoke pretty good Hungarian. Maybe here and there he had a little accent, which showed that Hungarian was not his mother tongue. I can remember that he counted in Yiddish. Father worked for the neolog Jewish community, as a sort of secretary under the chief secretary. For many years there was a very famous secretary at the community, Sandor Epler, whom my father liked a lot. He was kept quite busy, because Epler was a workaholic. He worked late into the night on many occasions, and my father did the same. I was twelve or thirteen when my mother died and my father and I were left alone. I could not bear the loneliness, and it often happened that I went to the community office where my father worked, and lay down there,

and he had to take me home half-asleep. It was not good, because my dear mother had spoiled me an awful lot, and I missed her. When I was fourteen, my father married again. His second wife, Matild Rosner, was a very observant Jewish woman who started teaching me to be more observant as well. Matild was a widow with two children: Laszlo and Rozsa. My father, his wife Matild and daughter Rozsa were in the cloth-gathering battalion in the Jewish Gymnasium. After the war my father and Matild could not go back to their old flat because the staircase had fallen down, and they were offered a shared flat. My father said that he would not go to any shared flat, that he had another house in the province and he would go and live there. This house was in Gyomro, close to Pest. It was a nice, detached house which my father and Matild had built, and in which they had lived before the war from spring until autumn. Matild was a very skilled woman, she knew how to work in the garden, too; it was she who told my father what had to be done there. They ran a kosher household and every Thursday Matild came to Pest to have the poultry killed by the schochet (the kosher butcher) and to buy beef. There was a nice little synagogue in Gyomro, and father attended services there. Every morning he prayed in tefillin (phylacteries). In 1957-58 Matild, together with my father, emigrated to Canada. We were on good terms with Matild; I visited her in Vancouver. She was crying when I left, because we knew that we would not see each other again. My father died in the 1960s-70s; Matild died a few years ago.