

The Erdelyi Family Out For A Walk In Piestany



This is a photograph of our whole family out for a walk in Piestany. On the left is my father (Arpad Erdelyi), I (Heda Ambrova), my sister (Magda Erdeliyova) and my mother (Ruzena Erdeliyova). The photo was taken around 1926.

My father was from the Eckstein family. They lived in Orava, in the town of Tvrdosin. I can't tell you any more about this family, because my father became an orphan when he was eight. He was born on 22nd December 1889. My father's original name was Arpad Eckstein. When he was in high school he changed his surname to Erdelyi.

My father was one of the best people you could imagine. You could say that he was a do-gooder. After his death, old women would stop me and say: 'We know you. That father of yours, that was some person!' He was very sensitive and retiring. But he had a great deal of knowledge in the area of pharmacy. All the local doctors respected him. He was actually a doctor for the children of doctors. In practice this meant that when a doctor's child fell ill, he'd come and consult with my father as to how to treat him. Everything I know about my father's past is from what my mother told me; he himself never talked about it. When he was having a good day, he'd at most tell us that when he was in school he had 10 kreuzers per day. That was enough for some bread and a bit of 'bryndza.' [Bryndza is a sheep's milk cheese made in the Balkans, Eastern Austria, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, and Ukraine.] He'd have no money left for anything else.

My mother was born on 2nd November 1892, as my grandparents' seventh child. She had beautiful blond hair and blue eyes. As my grandfather was building houses, she took a distilling exam and ran a distillery. My mother was engaged to some physicist who fell during the first weeks of World War I. In those days it wasn't usual for girls to graduate from high school, it wasn't in fashion. But my mother was headstrong and graduated. She was only allowed to attend a Catholic school, part time. She attended school once a week. When they were going up the stairs she had to go last, so

that they wouldn't see her ankles, and when they went downstairs she had to go first. She was the only girl in the class. Right at the beginning of the semester they told her that she'd never finish school. That the boys wouldn't allow it. She had a hard life there. During anatomy class someone put a finger on her exercise book. After that incident she left medicine and transferred to pharmacy.

After being forced to leave medicine, my mother began working in one pharmacy in Ruzomberok. There she met my father, who apparently was also working in Ruzomberok. They were married on 1st July 1919, probably in Ruzomberok. From the beginning my mother had someone to help her with the household, because she was very active. Not only did she found the Maccabi in Piestany, but she also gave free courses in making carpets using Persian knots, and net-making.