

Jan Sokal With The Hashomer Hatzair Group



These are my friends from Hashomer Hatzair. The photo was taken in Przemyśl but I don't know when exactly. Maybe in 1930 or 1928? I don't know who could take it.

I'm not able to recognize all the people on the picture. I even don't know where I am on it. Maybe I'm not on this photo at all? I really don't know.

All I remember are: Artek Wajman, in center, he was the oldest one. He had brother called Józef, who was a doctor probably. I don't remember exactly. Artek and his wife Hanka Grynszpajn went to Palestine before World War II. I hope they are still alive. There is Janek Laufer with his brother... Another one - Sztraus, but I don't know if he is still alive. I remember that he didn't manage to leave. Kreps...

I'm sure that someone from this group is still alive. I would love to find them and get into touch.

I have very pleasant memories of the school. I had a lot of friends, but I was close mainly with Jewish children. I had nothing against was not biased against Ukrainians, Poles. Absolutely not. Kids always jerk and hit one another but nobody ever told me: 'You Jew'. As a child I used to go to summer camp. Those were summer camps for poorer Jewish children, so called 'two-pennies'. Jewish social organizations took care of it. In the town we'd get onto the rack carts, padded with straw, and they took us 40, 50km away to particular villages. Those were not summer camps with some propaganda. We just simply knew we were a group of Jewish children that went to recover their health. There was healthy food and games of various kinds there. Such children's games.

I had many weaknesses in my life. Since early childhood I wanted to ride a bicycle. But it was a pipe dream. I was not in such an environment where a kid would have a bike. But I liked to ride. Rebbe's son, Mr. Rispler, had a bicycle workshop vis-a-vis our apartment. At the same time there was a bike rental place and people used to come, pay per hour and rent. So I used to go there, to that shop, I would clean up those bicycles, and later Mr. Rispler in return would loan me a bike, and I would ride it. It was my whim.

Beside that I had another fondness. I wanted to learn to swim, so I would go several kilometers out of town, and over there, on the San River, I would pick up some reed, tie it with a belt to fasten it firmly. I would put it on the water, there was a strong current, and I'd let myself downstream. Later I swam up to the town, to Przemyśl. That's how I learned to swim. It doesn't mean I was a master swimmer. But, at any rate, I was not chicken-hearted, and so I learned. Over there [on San] my friends had boats and a canoe rental place, and I was also eager for that. Whenever I had some time, I would learn to paddle a canoe on San. I was probably 14 years old then. San was my favorite place, where I would find an outlet for my energy.

I was brought up in a Hashomer Hatzair environment. It was a Jewish youth organization. They taught us orienteering. A type of scouting. Beautiful young people belonged to it, very progressive, very noble people, the most gifted, the most honest people. I grew up in there.