

## Rifca Segal And Marcu Calmanovici



This is me, Rifca Segal, with my father's brother, Marcu Calmanovici, who lived in Focsani, in front of my father's store in Sulita. This uncle of mine was very fond of me. Every time he came to Botosani he would bring me presents. He owned a ready-made clothes store and he would offer me dresses. But the wool outfit that I'm wearing in the picture was not a gift from him. The back of the picture reads: "To Moses Kinzbraun family in Galati, as a token of my love for them. Ricuta Calmanovici, 30 April 1929". This means that I sent it to my father's sister, Hanah Kinzbraun, who

lived in Galati.

One of my father's brothers lived in Focsani, his name was Marcu Calmanovici, who also married to a very rich girl – that's how it was back then – from Falticeni, her name was Bety, and he opened a large store in Focsani selling manufacture products and ready-made clothes. They had no children. He was arrested during communism on the grounds that he owned gold coins. He was denounced for owning gold coins, they searched his house and arrested him. He went to prison as well, but since they took the gold coins away from him, he received a light sentence. His wife died in Focsani in 1992-1993, after which he left to Israel. Let me confess another thing: he had a sweetheart from his youth, and she got married, had a daughter, but they continued to write each other secretly, through third parties. And when she heard that his wife died, I'm not even sure a year passed since she died, she came and took him to Israel. They were old by then, but you see what youth love means? I visited them in 1993, when I traveled to Israel, they lived in Naharia, they invited me to dine with them. She was very nice with me, and she gave me gifts, for she saw he loved me very much. He was my father's brother, he didn't have any children, and he loved me very much. And he was happy he could invite me there to see him. I think he died in 1994.

I, Rifca Segal, was born in 1928 in Sulita. Officially, my name is Rifca, they named me after a great-grandmother, the mother of my grandmother from my mother's side. But people call me Rica, as Sulita's county chief – his name was Hotupasu – had a daughter whose name was Rica. And my parents were very good friends with the county chief.

It was nice in Sulita. I miss it even now, as we led a very good life there. We had a house with several rooms, a cellar, an attic, a courtyard, and a barn in the courtyard. It was a brick house, like they built them in small towns, one next to another, adjoining. If, God forbid, a fire had broken out, all of them would have burned to the ground. In front, in the same building, there was the store, which was large enough, and then there was a kitchen to one side followed by three rooms, in the back. Small town kitchens had a fireplace with a cooking stove and an oven. It was made either from terracotta or from bricks. And when my parents renovated the house, they modernized it, they built a terracotta fireplace in the room in the middle. They left the one made of bricks in the bedroom as it was. Besides, it was very nicely built, with pillars. It was a house with an attic, a cellar. We dried laundry in the attic, and stored the food in the cellar – for we didn't have refrigerators back then, we didn't even have electricity in Sulita. We used lamps and lamp oil for lighting purposes. But we had a nice lamp, with silk. And of course, the toilet was in the courtyard. We didn't have a bathroom in the house. Even though my grandparents from my mother's side had a fountain in the courtyard, and they drew water from it using a water pump, and they built a bathroom inside their house. They had a bathtub, and they had a cauldron in which they drew water from the fountain through pipes, it reached the cauldron, the lower part of the cauldron – like in a terracotta or zinc stove –, had a compartment where you placed firewood, you lit the firewood, and the water was being heated. And it was very good, I used to go there myself to take a bath. For at home, my mother bathed me in a small tub. That's how it was in Sulita. But she added Chypre cologne from Paris to the water. But she bathed me in a small tub. That's how it was, and it was fine. Our life was so good! Had they not evacuated us, it would have been very well.

My mother was a housewife, and my father was a merchant. My father inherited his father's and grandmother's store, he continued to run their store. They sold haberdashery, shoes, perfumes, small ware, everything. My parents bought supplies from Botosani. There were merchants who

came from Botosani with cases of merchandise, who recommended you products, and you chose what you wanted. My father's handwriting was extraordinarily beautiful. He could also write a German gothic style, which I think nobody could write at that time. The letters had certain embellishments characteristic of each letter. He liked it very much. He was a self-taught man, for he didn't go to any faculty. He drew the shop signs himself, he did such a good job of it. For you placed a shop sign outside the store, on a piece of painted iron plate. The store didn't have a proper name, the iron plate read "Calmanovici's." I can picture it now. On a black piece of iron plate my father wrote the name in white paint, and my mother, in order for someone not to cast the evil eye on him, bound a red ribbon around his arm as he was painting the sign. And I used to laugh... She loved him very much. And they lived a very nice life.