

Gracia Albuhaire With Former Classmates



In 1994 I attended the celebration of the 50th anniversary of my high school graduation ball with my former classmates from Karnobat - we are the alumni of 1944. The picture was taken in the Karnobat city garden. I am standing, the fourth person from the right. There aren't any other Jews in the picture except me. Nora couldn't come from Israel. At the time when I was to start high school we had no money. Everyone said I should be responsible and begin work in order to support my family. I had just finished the 7th grade in junior high school. I had no choice so I started working for a tailor. I had to hem garments. I was stuck at my work place all day long; I wasn't even allowed to eat. The tailor kept telling my mother how skillful I was, and how I would become an excellent tailor. But I wasn't satisfied with this, because I wanted to continue studying. There was a bell in the school. It usually rang at 7.30am and at 2pm - few people in the town had watches and they used to orient themselves by the bell's ringing. When I heard the sound of that bell, I usually hid so that my mother wouldn't see me and I began to cry. I was so sad that I couldn't go to school. I remember that even for the poorest people the school fee was still expensive - 1,200 leva. I cried for a week and finally my mother decided there was something wrong. She managed to collect the money from here and there and finally I went to school about two months late. I enrolled in the 5th grade in the same way - several months late, yet this time I wrote to my elder brother Jack in Sofia and he sent me the money. At school they knew I was a good student and they always showed understanding.