

Matilda Albuhaire's Father Solomon Albuhaire



This is my father Solomon Albuhaire. The photo was taken in the Kokinos photo shop in Bourgas in the 1910s. My father was born in Istanbul in 1880. My grandpa came to Bulgaria in 1882 with his two-year-old son, my father, without his wife. He lived in Bourgas with his son and remarried. My father spoke Turkish and Greek and, because he needed it for his business - he was a merchant - he spoke a little French, too. I can't remember how my parents met. Somebody did the match-making, because my father was a very introverted and modest person. I think they got married in Bourgas, probably in the synagogue. In those times everybody got married only in the synagogue. There was no other kind of marriage. My elder brother Jack was born in 1914. I was born in 1916. Until 1924, when my younger brother Mair was born, Ladino was spoken at home. We lived in a two-story house. The kitchen and the guest room were on the first floor, and on the second floor were the bedrooms. My grandpa, my elder brother and I used to sleep in one bedroom, and my parents and my younger brother in the other bedroom. In the mornings, when we went downstairs to go to school, grandpa had already lit the stove, the kettle was boiling and it was always warm. Otherwise there was no heating upstairs because it was not so cold in Bourgas. The house was next to the Turkish bath and on Fridays my mother and I used to go there. We had running water - a big faucet where we used to wash the dishes, but we had no bathroom. There was a small yard in front of the house. My father had planted an apricot tree - from a sapling and we, the children, used to go and watch it. I remember that there was a cupboard in the first-floor room, which opened like a piano. I kept on imagining that it was my piano, and that I played it. Initially we had a maid in that house; it was very difficult to maintain tidiness. I remember some Yanka, a maid from the Gorna Oriahovitsa area. My mother was very ill and we occupied the two floors. Our neighbors had a very good attitude toward us. They used to bring us kozunak [special bread baked for Easter] and we used to give them burmulicus and matzah. My parents' friends were Jews and we used to live very well with our neighbors. We had a friendly family in Bourgas, the Benshushans. They were our closest friends. They helped us a lot. My parents were well off. But when problems with money started, squabbles began; there was no peace. After my grandpa's death, my father and mother

continued to observe the kashrut, but when we were not doing well financially, we didn't observe it.