Matilda Albuhaire's Family

This photo was taken in Bourgas in 1930. On this photo are my grandfather, my mother, my father and my two brothers and I. At that time we were still well off. It is obvious by the way we are dressed. In 1930 my grandfather was still alive, he could not have been too old - about 60. My father was in his forties. My older brother Jack was a student at the economics high school. They used to wear special uniforms at that time, because the school discipline was very strict. It was compulsory to wear white collars, like the ones I am wearing one on this photo. And I remember that in order to keep it creases-free I used to put it in a notebook with clean sheets and used to put it on only when I got to school. It wasn't stitched to the garment, but it was separate. We used to wear special black overalls, too. This here is not an overall, but an official garment - skirt and blouse, and the white collar. New clothes were made for Pesach and here my younger brother Mair is dressed in clothes made by a taylor that used to come to our place for a few days in a row to sew them. I remember this garment because it was a combination of beige with green pieces of fabric. I guess it must have been on the afternoon of some official holiday on which we went to a photo studio to have this photo taken as a memory. And thank God we did that, because we haven't got many other photos of this kind. On this photo I was 14, so I was probably already in high school, in the first grade of high school. I studied at the girls' high school - my friends were both Jewish and Bulgarian girls. My best friend was a Bulgarian girl, her name was Elena Sabeva. We shared the same desk. There was a Jasmina, too. I had Jewish friends, too: Rashka Assa, Regina. We used to celebrate our birthdays, and celebrated with the Bulgarian girls a lot, got together, sang and played. All the subjects in high school were my favorites. My math tests were faultless. In the logarithmic tables only the teacher's signature was in red. I used to read The Shipka Volunteer Force very nicely and expressively in literature classes. I used to read so well that my teacher took me to other classes to demonstrate it. When there were Religion classes in our school, we used to go to the Jewish school for Hebrew classes. At school we had no spare time. We had engagements all the time. We had numerous lessons to prepare - math and narrative subjects, and trained in gymnastics, too. We never went anywhere on vacation with the school, but we used to go to the beach. Bourgas is on the coast, anyway. Our parents never stopped us from going to the beach.

We used to go to the garden, too. As schoolgirls we used to have an evening curfew, but sometimes we broke it. Sometimes we went to the movies. On many occasions we, the girls, got together at home to do 'jours' [card game]. The big jours used to take place on Yom Kippur because our parents were not home - they had to be in the synagogue for the whole day. We didn't observe taanit. Who would do taanit, anyway? We had different youth organizations but we never quarreled. There was the Hashomer Hatzair, the Betar, etc., but we all lived together and there was love between all of us, the youth. There were a lot of us then, about 20-25 young Jews. There were no anti-Jewish sentiments in the elementary school, but there were in high school. We had a gym teacher. I don't remember what day it was, perhaps the day of the Leaders of the Bulgarian National Renaissance, but she was speaking about something, using some anti-Semitic phrases all the time. My life's greatest weakness is that I am very sensitive and cannot control myself. I couldn't stand it any longer, stood up and asked her: 'Haven't Bulgarian Jews fought for Bulgaria, haven't they demonstrated patriotism?' and I started crying. But I said it, anyway! That was before Hitler came to power. I had just completed high school.