

Tori And Rosa Modiano And Rosa Alvo With A Teacher



This is a picture of my sister Rosa (seated), my cousin Rosa Modiano (first from left), a teacher of theirs (center) and my cousin Tori Modiano (first from right).

My younger sister was called Rosa. My first grandmother, who had died, was called Rosa, and since then all the girls were named after her.

She was born in 1929.

When my sister was born, Lily gave birth to her daughter two months later. And they were both named Rosa. And because my mother didn't have a lot of milk and Lily did, I remember my aunt holding one baby on each breast. One baby was hers and the other one was our sister.

Because she was the youngest one in the family, my brother and I had her under our protection. The parents also had their weakness towards her, as the youngest in a family are always treated so.

She was a very nice, very kind girl. A neighbor of ours, Tahiaos, who lived close to us and used to see her at school, was a bit in love with her.

Whenever he sees me now, he says "oh this Rosa your sister, oh this Rosa your sister".

Rosa knew French very well, and a little bit of Judeo Spanish. She knew perfect Greek. Because she had Christian friends, but also because she also read at school. She was very good in essay writing.

We the children, between ourselves, would speak both French and Greek. We would never start a conversation and speak only in one language.

We would start talking in French, continue in Greek and in the end we would finish up with Spanish. We spoke less Spanish, but we spoke it with our grandparents.

Our mother tongue was both French and Greek. We learned both languages at the same time. It was the same with our friends.

Rosa did her primary and secondary education at Schina. She didn't go to the Mission Laique, I don't see any reason why she should have changed school. It was near the house, and she had learned French already at home.

Anyway, by that time, in 1942, France had already fallen and the Mission Laique didn't exist. There were only Greek schools around.

Rozas' friends were from her school. She had Jewish and Christian friends. At Schina there were many Jewish students because of the neighborhood.

Rosa used to go to the movies with my parents or with her friends. Or, she would go with the maid. If there was a children's film on, the maid would take her to watch it. She was such a coquette when she was young. She liked being dressed nicely.

My mother was strict on that. One time that she was going to the movies she wore a nice dress and my mother got very angry and told her to take it off and wear something more casual. She would say, "you should be ashamed, just because you will go to the cinema today, you want to dress up".

This happened when she was still very young, around six or seven years old. Everyone wanted things to be simple, not pretend that you are someone special. And both my father and mother were of a very low profile.

When the deportations started, and my mother realized that the situation was becoming very difficult, she told me "go". I told her that I should take my sister with me when I was to leave, but my mother didn't want to be separated from her. She didn't let her, so I left alone.

What I found out is that when my sister and my father got to Auschwitz, they didn't go straight to the ovens. My father lasted three or four months. My mother went straight away, she didn't survive at all, and my sister lasted very little time.

Rosa and Tori Modiano were the children of my mother's sister Lily. She was married to Dario Modiano who was an Italian citizen.

Lily had a maid for 15 years who came from a village in Chalkidiki, Katina. She was protecting Rosa and was scolding Tori. Whenever they would argue, she would protect Rosa.

During the war, Aunt Lily and her family survived. When the deportations started, the Italians with an army train took all the Italian citizens who were in Thessaloniki and moved them to the Italian zone.

They didn't let the Germans take them. So, they came down to Athens and hid. When Italy fell and surrendered, Aunt Lily was hiding in Athens with her two children. Her husband went to the mountains, with the partisans. They helped him go and hide there with his two brothers and his eldest son Tori.

After the war, Rosa Modiano got married to an American navy officer. She married him around 1953. He was here working on the establishment of the AHEPA Hospital. He stayed in Athens and in Thessaloniki for two years.

That's how they met. I don't know how he met Rosa. They got married and left for America. They traveled a lot because of his work. They stayed in Iraq for four or five years and the same in Brazil.

The Americans helped with hospitals and they would send him. Later on, when he stopped traveling and stayed in America permanently, Rosa got a job there.

They had taken her to read the papers and the magazines and wherever they wrote about America she would separate those articles and write an analysis, because she knew many different languages.

She learned Farsi which is Iraq's native language. She learned Spanish better than Ladino. And she learned Portuguese when she was in Brazil.