

Yosif Sabitai With A Friend



This is a photo of my father Yosif Sabitai (sitting) with a friend and neighbor of his. The photo was taken in Sofia in the 1920s. My father was a tinsmith and plumber. In 1928, a year before I was born, the winter was severely cold. Many water pipes and taps had cracked. That created plenty of work for my father and, putting a lot of efforts into it, he managed to make his fortune. And in the place of the one-roomed house, he built a house with two rooms, kitchen and a toilet inside, which was a great rarity at that time. We had hot water from a coal-heated boiler, too, which my father,

being a very skilled craftsman, had connected to the stove. Four children were born in that house - one boy and three girls (including me). All the children used to sleep in the same room: my sisters and I on the bed and my brother on the divan. My parents occupied the smaller room. We grew up in such conditions and lived this way until 1946, when my brother went to France and the divan was vacated. In 1928 my father established a Jewish society called Mitzvah Zion. This society engaged in charity and helped poor citizens of Jewish origin in Sofia. My father took part in the public life of Jews in Sofia. Together with the other well-off citizens of Jewish origin, he helped with the allocation of financial funds and different articles to his poorer compatriots through the Mitzvah Zion society. Our family was comparatively well off because my father had succeeded in changing his fortune through his work as a tinsmith and plumber, and had even managed to open a scrap warehouse. The house he had built was at the corner of Pernik and Positano and for that time, it was one of the best in the quarter. During the winters we used coal for heating and we had a shed full of coal. My mother used to give a bucket of coal to everybody who would ask her for some - she never refused anyone and always showed compassion for those poorer than us. There were many poor people at that time. The poorest Jewish families lived in our quarter. Wealthier Jews lived in the more central part of Sofia.