

Dona And Isidor Danon



Photo of my mother and father on their engagement day, Gracanica (1918). When my father was 13 he was bar mitzvahed, and according to Judaism, from that time a young man begins to fight for his own survival. My father told me that his Bar Mitzvah was a big and festive celebration, that the chief Rabbi from Bjeljina came and he received many presents. They made a special point to accent the Bar Mitzvah because it gave strength to the young boys, who were in fact still children, to get on a serious path in life. After his Bar Mitzvah my grandfather called my father, Isidor, into his room for a conversation. In short, he told him, now that you are an adult, it is time that you start to work and make money. My father asked what he meant and his father told him that he would give him some start-up capital. This capital consisted of 20 molds for making soap, domestic soaps which were cooked and then cut with a knife. He received the soaps and went to the market, took a box, covered it with newspaper and began selling. By evening, he had sold all the soap. Counting the money he realized that he had made twice as much as his father said they were worth. The next day he went to his father's shop and his father gave him more soap, he paid for them and little by little he became a relatively rich man. He was incredibly hardworking, industrious, smart, sweet, honest and everyone he came into contact with wanted to talk with him and do business with him. By the time he was 15 he had already saved a certain amount of money. He hired a carpenter to build him a stand on the marketplace and he sold his goods from the stand, protected from rain and sun. He also went to a tailor who made him a suit in order to improve his appearance, he looked like a businessman and he always advanced. He decided that he could also sell cakes. There were many poor Jewish women who knew how to make good cakes so he hired them and he began to sell homemade cakes at the market. At the time, Bjeljina was a tense border zone with Serbia (at that time, Austria was just across the border), so the garrison presence had been strengthened. There was a big military presence. The main customers for those cakes were soldiers and students. With time, he continued to advance and in the end he went to Tuzla, found a place for a store and there he began his own business. He worked with manufactured goods and the work went well. One day he went to Gracanica, a place near Tuzla, to get goods for his shop. While walking down the street he noticed two girls passing by. He took note of one in particular. She was extraordinarily pretty, with lovely eyes, beautiful hair, a nice figure and he followed the

girls. However, the problem was how to find out who these girls were. He went a few steps ahead of them and stopped at a store and took another good look at them. At that moment an old man came out of the store and he asked them who those two girls were, especially the black-haired one. He told him that they were Cadik Danon's daughters, a merchant from Gracanica. He decided to meet them and in the end he decided to go to synagogue. It was Friday night and he met Cadik Danon who invited him to the Seder dinner. They met, they liked one another and within a very short time they were engaged and married. Isidor began his new life with his beloved wife Dona.