

Hana Gasic's Father Menahem Montiljo Walking Down The Street In Sarajevo



This is my father walking down the street in Sarajevo. The photo was taken before he got married to my mother.

My father was the son of Mose and Hana (nee Elazar) Montiljo Hahasid ("the pious"). He was born in Sarajevo on November 9, 1910 and died in Sarajevo on April 25, 1981. His family was given the nickname "Hasid" as a sign that they were a religious family and to distinguish them from the

many other Montiljos in Sarajevo.

My father was an outgoing man. He loved to sing, especially Ladino songs, and drink and eat with his friends. My mother was more reserved, a bit less social, and cautioned my father about his excesses. He worked as a tailor first in a private shop and then for the Sarajevo Theater. He worked hard to provide for our family. While we lived a very modest life, in a small home, he made sure to put money aside for trips to the seaside and for our education. During the war, he was hidden by his boss Gavro Perkusic. When there were raids to round up Jews, Mr. Perkusic would hide my father in his tailor shop until the raids had passed. When my mother, brother and I were rounded up and taken to the collection centers, somehow Mr. Perkusic would learn of this and arrange for our release.

Eight of my father's siblings were killed during the war. In 1948 his two surviving brothers and his mother left for Israel. My father was concerned that he would be unable to make a living there, and remained in Yugoslavia. He went to visit in 1957 to see his mother one last time before her death. This trip did not change his mind about his decision to remain in Yugoslavia.

My father was very involved in the Jewish community and our local Sarajevo community. In the Jewish community he was part of the inner circle of people who continued to maintain some of the traditions. He was one of the twenty or so men who would participate in the Passover seder, and he was a regular at the Friday night and holiday minyan (prayer quorum). He attended the services regularly but never led them.

In our local community he was involved in social action and community improvement projects. He lobbied the government to erect a plaque on a house on our street that was used as a printing house during the war. The plaque had a small light on it and my father felt it was his responsibility to inform the local government whenever the light went out. Although he was active in community life he was not interested in political functions. He received several citations and awards for his efforts.