

## Efraim And Jul Levi



This is a photo of my father, Efraim Levi, and me in the town park near our home in Salonica. It was taken in 1931 when I was one year old. It's interesting that my father never wore a tie. I remember him wearing a bow tie and a bowler hat; the hat was a must because of the hot sun in Greece. I loved him very much.

I was born in Salonica on 19th June 1930. Obviously the Franco-Sephardi roots of my maternal kin had their say. So, I was named after my maternal grandfather, who was Jeuda Merkado Ovadia.

My parents have always been the nicest couple on earth, according to me. My father was born in Samokov to the large family of the local rabbi. He was one of seven children. After the polytechnic school, in 1912, he graduated in architecture and just as he received his degree, he got the news on the start of the wars: the First Balkan War, the Second Balkan War and World War I. He decided to return to Bulgaria immediately. My father had a proverbial sense of duty and responsibility. When he got back to Bulgaria, he joined the engineer forces and fought at the front for eight years. For some well-done task, of which I don't know any details, he received a Medal of Valor, two more medals and some stripes. Besides all the awards and victories in the wars, he achieved another victory of a different kind. And it was the greatest one!

During his leave my father went to Seres. There was a Bulgarian garrison there and his eldest brother Buko was serving there. Since my uncle was in the supply service, my father had permission to sleep outside the barracks and he was accommodated with the family of Mr. Jeuda Merkado Ovadia. He had four sons and one daughter. The daughter was the youngest and obviously the most wanted. Her name was Victoria. Whenever my father visited his brother he slept at the same house. During his last day before he returned to his company, my father shared with his brother that when World War I finished and if he was still safe and sound, he would go back and ask Mr. Ovadia for the hand of his daughter, because he was sure she was 'the lady of his heart.' My uncle told his landlord that, but he answered that his daughter was too young: she was 16 years old, and they would have to ask for her consent. Then, the door opened 'by accident' and the young girl said, 'I'll wait for him!' And so it was.