

Mario Modiano With His Mother And Cousins



This photo was taken in the 1930s. Here you can see my mother Nella with two nephews of mine and myself, in the countryside near Salonica. The little girl sitting in the middle is Tany, but I don't remember the other child's name. She was the daughter of Albert Tchenio, who was a member of the Greek Parliament, and Rebecca. She was a first cousin on my mother's side. Both of these were Shoah victims. I am at my mother's arm.

I am here without glasses which I started wearing when I was in the sixth grade of elementary school because I was supposed to be learning to play the violin. And my uncle Joseph had given me a violin to play. But then I soon discovered that I couldn't read the music score that was just one meter away. That's how we discovered that I was shortsighted. So I gave up the violin, and I got myself a pair of glasses.

My mother was very sweet and very pretty. She was a gentle person and had a lot of understanding. She wasn't a mother that was smothering her children; she would see to it that we grew up to be human beings. She would put pepper in our mouths if we said a dirty word. She wasn't a pushy Jewish mother, not at all. Mother was running our household as well as the whole family, since Father was so busy.

In the summer we used to go to the seaside. There was a taxi driver called Grigoris and we would share the taxi with neighbors to go to Karabournaki for a swim. One day I convinced Grigoris to let me hold the taxi's driving wheel. I must have been seven. I promptly drove the car into a ditch. So that ended my first attempt to drive. The facilities at the beach were at the time quite primitive. However, we didn't know any better and would be very happy to be in the sea.