

Ema And Avni Tuncer



Here you can see my mother Ema and my father Avni Tuncer, during their courtship. The photo was taken in Istanbul in 1932. Already while working at the Marmarosh Bank's accounting department, my father was a member of the Jewish Amicale society, or club. On weekends, young people in pairs, a boy and a girl, used to visit the homes of members of the community, with money-boxes, and collected donations for the society. He thus took part in the social life of the community. Then he volunteered to do the accounting - a skill he had developed at the bank - for the community-run Or-ahayim Hospital for no pay. As the years went by, he was more and more busy with his commission work and could not spare time any more to work pro bono for the Or-ahayim Hospital. At that time, a young woman volunteered for the hospital job: my mother! They met as he was transferring the accounts to her. She fell in love with him immediately. My father was not very tall, 1.74 meters, but largely built; he weighed 80 kilos. His hair, which was originally blond, progressively became light brown. He had brown eyes. He liked to dress elegantly, and had ties of all colors. My mother, Ema Benezra Finanser, was three years older than him. She was 'mignonne,' slim, 48 kilos, 1.58 meters, had bright blue eyes and light brown hair - all in all, a dainty lady. After a few weeks, during which Mother took over the Hospital's accounting, my father was out of sight. About six months later, my mother was walking in Beyoglu - her family used to live in Bankalar caddesi - when upon reaching the Galatasaray Post Office, it started to rain torrentially. She took refuge under the eaves of a building, trying to figure out how best to cross the street. Just then, she saw and immediately recognized my father holding a black umbrella and saying, 'Would you allow me to escort you across the street?' She promptly accepted. He opened his umbrella, gave her his arm, and they crossed the street arm in arm under the umbrella. Then my father said, 'How will you walk home? Please, let me accompany you there?' which he did. That is the moment when it all happened. They made a date to meet again and started to see each other. This was in 1931 or 1932. In the months that followed, whenever he fetched or took her home, he would go up to her apartment and meet my grandparents, who liked him. In time, however, they started to attract people's attention, which gave way to gossip in the community. People said, 'Avni Bey is seeing a girl, but she is much too young for him.' Although my mother was three years older than my father, she was so petite and dainty that people thought she was much

younger than him. My mother enjoyed relating this with a laugh.