# Renée Molho

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Thessaloniki
Greece
Interviewer: Molho Nina
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Miss Renée Molho is 83 years old. She is a beautiful, fine, and very elegant lady. She has slight movement problems and limps a little. She lives alone in a big apartment that she shared in the past with all her family. She has a very big balcony and is very proud of her flowers. Flowers are all over, almost in every picture on the wall. She told me that it is some kind of recognition towards the man who saved her. During the interview, she was emphatic, hitting her hand on the table. Sometimes she got upset with "all those words" but did not want to stop talking. She made an effort to speak in Greek but she also speaks Ladino and uses French or English words according to her convenience. She narrates with passion, she whispers in fear and gets tensed with indignation. She retired only two years ago at the age of 81 from the bookshop business that she was running with her husband. She worked there all her life since the liberation. She was running the department of French books which made the bookshop famous all over Greece.



## Family background

My name is Renée Molho; my maiden name is Saltiel Abravanel. I was born in Thessaloniki on 9th August 1918. During the German occupation I lived in Israel. I speak Greek, French, English, Spanish [Ladino] 1 and I understand Italian.

I have two sisters, Matilde Dzivre who lives in Athens, and Eda Saporta who lives in Paris. Matilde was born in 1917 and Eda in 1921. They both speak the same languages I do.

All the members of our family were Spanish citizens. Our origins are from Spain but I don't know where exactly in Spain.

My paternal grandmother was called Mazaltov Saltiel, nee Saporta, and my grandfather Samuel Saltiel. Grandmother Saporta lived in an apartment by herself in a two-story house. On the first floor lived my uncle Sinto and on the ground floor my grandmother. Sinto was the older of my

grandmother's sons.

The siblings of my father, Joseph Samuel Saltiel, were: Sinto, then came my father Joseph, then Uncle Avram, Uncle Mentesh, Uncle Sabetai and then Aunt Sol, who married [Vidal] Amarilio, Aunt Julia, Aunt Berta and Aunt Bellika.

Uncle Sinto was married to Bella Malah; their children were Samuel, Mathilde, Linda, Rosa, Renée and Alice.

Uncle Avram married Regina, aunt Regina, who knows what her last name was. They had two children, Lelia and Mathilde.

Uncle Mentesh had two boys with Rachelle Pinhas, Samiko and Moris. Moris used to come in the house yard and say to his mother, 'cota ikoula' [posta Rikoula], the post arrived Rikoula, meaning he had his underwear full.

Uncle Sabetai had Samiko and Julia and he was married to Rene, Aunt Rene. They were all Spanish citizens.

They used to call my maternal grandfather Nadir but his name was actually Shabetai. They called him Nadir because he was a very persisting and intelligent man. He used to get up at 4 in the morning to study French. When the Turks had to make a speech, he was the one to prepare it. He was such a good man and they loved him so much that they called him Nadir which means in Hebrew and in Turkish 'Rare.' They always loved and appreciated him.

I don't know what his profession was because when my mother, Stella Abravanel, married he was already dead. I never met him, I only heard of him.

My grandmother on my mother's side was Rikoula Abravanel, nee Tsinio. She lived with her children, my mother's siblings. They were David, Pepo, Leon and Mario, all Abravanel and Rachelle who married Avram Haim, who was selling oilcloths, and with whom she had five children: Lina, Elio, Renée, Nadir and Silvia.

Uncle Pepo married Mitsa Rosengrad, lived here in Thessaloniki and had one daughter, Rena Abravanel, Greenup in her marriage, who now lives in America.

Uncle David was a very honest and integral person. He was the manager of 'The Commercial,' a big tobacco company, and he was highly appreciated there. He never married and all his love went to his sisters, my mother and Aunt Rachelle, and their kids. He always came to visit and was interested in us; he wanted to see our school records and wanted to know who was a good student, who was not and why.

When my father's shop was destroyed by the fire 2 it was Uncle David who was next to him, to encourage him and he even gave him the money to start all over again. At the same time he opened a bank account for my mother so that she wouldn't have to worry, that she wouldn't have to ask anybody when she needed something. Of course I have a weak spot for him in my heart. He was always there for us, helping in any way he could.

Uncle Leon was married to Nini Nahmias and had two girls, Riki that is Rikoula, and Victoria, they were four or five years old when the war started. He worked at 'The Commercial,' the tobacco

company managed by his older brother David.

Uncle Mario married Ida. Her father war a doctor, who had studied and had been trained in the Hospitals of Paris [les hôpitaux de Paris]. When they married they went to live in Paris with her parents but they didn't make it and came back to Thessaloniki. When they came back, Ida's parents followed them and her father was our family doctor and explained everything very nicely to us. I don't know what Uncle Mario did in France but here he was an expert in tobacco. They had a boy, Edward, and two girls, Renée and Lily Abravanel.

During the occupation they were not deported but were hiding in Athens. Edward had already died because during the gathering at Eleutherias Square 3 he got meningitis and died from it.

After the liberation they escaped to Israel hiding in a ship. But Uncle Mario, he was unlucky; he died in the ship and they threw him overboard. His daughters, however, got married in Israel and lived in the kibbutz Afikim.

My father, Joseph Samuel Saltiel, was born here in Thessaloniki [on 5th June 1881]. He spoke Spanish and German and, of course, Greek. He was beautiful, tall, dark-haired, attractive. He was not very funny; he was serious, probably more serious than he should have been because he had three girls and that bothered him. He dressed in a suit wearing a tie, and was never neglected, hat of course and gloves, he was always very well dressed. A very elegant man.

He read the newspapers, L' Indépendant 4, Le Progrés 5, maybe not every day but he read them very frequently.

My father wasn't very courageous and even if he had political preferences he would never express them publicly. He wasn't that kind of a man. But he was very wise. Let's say that two people had an argument, they would go to him to make the compromise because he was very just, correct and wise. They all trusted his sincerity and his logic. Middle man, intermediator, compromiser may be the correct word. He would ask: What are your differences with him? And yours? Why don't you do this or that and he tried to make them see sense and find an acceptable answer to whatever their problem was.

At home we didn't discuss things, current events, actuality, politics, rumors or anything. He wasn't the kind to have long conversations. He didn't talk a lot, he wasn't funny.. He wasn't communicative, nor expansive. I never remember him laughing out loud; he was always a little distant, even when he was with his friends, distant! You couldn't reach him easily but I was number one to his love.

He was not making favors to anybody but with me he would shake hands! He would never shake hands with anybody. If he had to, and couldn't avoid it, he would rush back home to wash his hands and clean them with alcohol. He was so afraid of microbes and contamination and in the end he died of cancer.

How was he? He was very strict, very strict and very just. He wanted to be just and this locked him into himself. He never showed any affection, hardly to anyone; to his wife I don't know. He was an introvert.

He didn't go to the army. At that time the army was Turkish. It was in 1912 that Thessaloniki became Greek and during the Turkish period paying a certain amount of money would assure that they didn't go to the army.

My father was a construction wood seller. He imported wood from Romania. I remember him coming back from a trip, and he wore high boots and a coat with fur inside and had a fur hat. When he came back he seemed to me, as I was a little girl, as big as the door, at least, this picture is still with me, my father big, tall, strong, and beautiful.

My mother had a completely different character. Aunt Rachelle, her sister, was tall and fat, while my mother was short, thin and very intelligent and had a happy disposition. She was always very elegant, always very well dressed. She was very careful, never got dirty and whatever was in fashion she would wear. I remember that once my grandmother Abravanel was very shocked because she was wearing a dress that was short; short is just above the knee! That was in fashion then so she was wearing it.

She was very small and she used to wear shoe size 34. At that time the shoes were always made for you. You didn't go to the market to buy shoes; you went to the craftsman who would take your measurement and make them for you. Often the shoes were not well fitted, they were very tight or short and your feet would have calluses all over.

She was a happy person and used to sing a lot. She was making jokes, and was laughing at any given occasion. She liked to read and had a subscription to a French historical magazine.

She didn't wear any makeup or lipstick but she used face powder and I still have a small box of it, well hidden, just to smell my mother.

I know that my parents' marriage was arranged by a match-maker. How did match-making work? Well, somebody who knew the families and knew that this family had a daughter, let's say 20 years old, could suit that family that had that and that boy, and they tried to put them in contact. The parents, of course, not the children. That was well before the age they get married now, at 18, 19, 20; if a girl was not married my 29, she was an old maid.

Marriages were combined. They knew the family; they were brokers, marriage brokers. He/she knew your family and he said, 'ah, he has a son, he has a daughter let's try to get them together .They went and they bargained: 'Yes, I will give you my daughter but how much does he want for a dowry? Dowry that much, and house furnishing that much, and clothing that much.'

Sometimes, during the first years, they lived with the wife's family, they said the groom will stay with the family and then he will make his own home. My parents didn't live with their parents because when they married my mother had no father and Grandmother lived with her boys who weren't married yet.

Marriage depended on what hands you were going to be in, what kind of person your spouse would be. It was rare then to have marriages based on love. I don't know any.

At this time there were not many mixed marriages, very very few. In our family the sisters of Aunt Mitsa, Ida Margariti, and Silva intermarried and all their children are Christians. I don't know what the opinion of the rest of the family was because when it happened I was a little girl. When I was a

child, we lived in a house that had a big yard. In this yard was a big two-story house where my uncle Sinto lived with his family, on the first floor, and on the ground floor my grandmother and my grandfather with Uncle Mentesh and Uncle Sabetai, who were not married yet.

## Family life

Our house was a small one on the other side of the yard. It had two rooms and a living room: a living room as you entered, two bedrooms and a kitchen, of course. It was heated by wood stoves but not in every room - one in the living room and one in the kitchen; the bedrooms were cold. One bedroom was for our parents and the other one for us, the three girls. Matilde had a bed of her own but Eda and I used to sleep together in the same bed.

Eda was younger than me and she was a joyful person. She was no pessimist, I was more of a pessimist, and I have always been. I always was much more reserved. Eda was exuberant, like my mother, happy, and she danced, she danced that Russian dance sitting down, kalinka, I think they call it, she danced a lot and she liked it.

In the house we had running water. We had running water, but in the yard was a hand-operated water pump. We used it to water the plants. The funny thing is that we also had a bath tub although this wasn't a common thing at the time. We had some kind of a boiler that operated with gas. It had a small base with seven beaks, you would open it, put a lit match to all the beaks and with the fire have hot water. It was a round thing, approximately 20cm, and when the fuel was finished you would open it up and put some more. We also had electricity.

In this garden we didn't grow anything edible, vegetables or so, just flowers and green plants. In this garden, all of us children gathered to play; five of Uncle Sinto and us three, but I used to sit on the fence and watch what they were doing because they were wild.

We didn't have any animals. In this yard we played and every night Uncle Sabetai gathered us and made us sing 'be, a, ba, be, a, be, ba, bo.' He would say the letters and we would sing like stupid 'l, le, l, la,' and then he would response with a cry of admiration 'Aaa,' or a cry of exclamation, 'Ooo.' He kept us busy; he gave us money and then took it back.

When we lived in this yard, my grandfather used to sit on a low parapet in front of the house and watched his grandchildren playing. There was a pomegranate tree that was very small, with two flowers, and he was waiting for them to turn into fruit, and one day he saw that one of the flowers was fading and fading. Eda had cut the flower and then when she realized what she had done she took a needle and pinched it back on. When my grandfather saw what had happened he was moved by her thought and didn't punish her.

My grandfather use to sit on this parapet because he had a hernia and a huge belly and he couldn't walk, and he was sitting on the parapet there, looking at his grandchildren play. He used to wear an andari 6. He couldn't wear anything else because his belly was enormous.

He didn't wear a kippah but he was a religious man. Every Friday evening a minyan would gather his house and do the traditional reading there, instead of at the synagogue. I don't know which synagogue they went to the rest of the week.

My father didn't attend. He couldn't leave his work. At first they didn't work on Sabbath but then, there was a law issued by the Greek government, in 1924, that defined Sunday to be the official weekly holiday and they had to work even if they didn't want to.

My grandmother dressed as we dress now. She didn't wear any of the traditional clothing of the Jewish women. I know those clothes only from pictures; nobody wore them any more when I was a little girl.

Many Jews lived in our neighborhood, but our family was so big, that we didn't look outside of it for friends. Actually all of them were Jews. The grocer and the man selling vegetables, and what I remember is that they would pass through the neighborhood and cry their wares. The man that sold glassware, he used to sing, 'The glass man is here, the cheap stuff is here, three for twelve and a half, three glasses twelve and a half.'

When the vegetable seller passed by my grandmother's home - my grandmother's home had two windows facing the street, in one window stood my grandfather and in the other, a bit in the rear, my grandmother - and my grandfather used to call the man and ask him, 'How much is it for a tomato today?' 'Ah very expensive, I don't want it, will you give it to me at a lower price?' 'Well, what can I do with you Mr. Samuel, how much do you want to pay?'

My grandfather would say a price and my grandmother, from the other window, would wave to the man, 'Say yes, say yes.' 'Well, what can I do with you, Mr. Samuel? I will give it to you but only because it's you.' Grandfather would take the goods and my grandmother would pay the difference from the other window, just to make my grandfather happy, to give him the satisfaction of having achieved something.

The streets? Who went out in the streets? From what I can recall they were unpaved, covered with earth not asphalt. I don't remember when I first saw asphalt. We didn't have a car but yes, of course, there were cars in the streets. We didn't have horses either; we rode on the bus or tram, rather the tram than the bus. I don't remember when I first rode in a bus, a tram, a car or a train.

We were still very young when we left that house. We left when we had to go to school, every time the school moved we moved too. First Konstandinidi then Gravias then... We were following the Mission Laique Francaise 7.

When we left this first house, we were still not alone, we were never alone, because the house we moved to was in a street full of Jews, all the neighborhoods were full of Jews, and we played hide and seek, and we went to hide one bus stop away from home. How can someone find you, can you tell me? And we played kede - kede. We used to put a stone in the middle, and whoever was called, kede kede Spain, kede kede Vienna, the person that was Vienna had to throw the stone at someone, if the stone touched him he lost.

## Our religious life

My parents were religious people but not fanatics. My father used to go to the synagogue for the high holidays of New Year [Rosh Hashanah], Passover [Pesach], Yom Kippur etc. We were three girls, and girls didn't go to the synagogue then, almost only men. We stayed at home with Mother, but when my father went, he used to dress formally in striped trousers, a black jacket and a bow-

tie [Ascot style, like an English gentleman].

We observed the kashrut in the sense that the butcher was Jewish and the meat was kosher. Every Friday the butcher came to our home to take an order, 'What shall I bring, should I bring a lombo?' Lombo was a piece of meat that you could boil and cut into thin slices, and he also brought meat to make minced meat. We would never buy it ready, we would mince it by hand, with a machine at home, and my mother used to call us, 'Who will come to mince the meat?'

Every Friday night my father recited the Kiddush. Not only did he recite the Kiddush, but he also cut some baked eggs [huevos encaminados], and gave us a piece and then, after the Kiddush, we went and kissed his hand and he blessed us. Every Friday. No Friday would go by that we didn't do it. We didn't make any special bread for Friday; we bought it from the Jewish baker.

At Rosh Hashanah we did whatever we should do. We ate whatever the religion says that we should eat. We did everything, and I remember some things that he used to say in Hebrew; they are still in my head although I don't know any Hebrew. My father didn't speak Hebrew but he read it. The traditional things of Rosh Hashanah are the same as we have now: apple sweet, to wish a good year, and meat balls with leek and with spinach.

We kept Yom Kippur. When my father came home, on the first evening of Yom Kippur we had to be ready, washed, clean, calm and my father would come and we would eat the traditional meal before the fast. We ate okra, meat balls and rice, a salad as a starter, and fruit at the end. We used to put dry raisins on top of the rice and eat it. We all kept the fast, my mother and father, also.

My father would go to the synagogue in the morning, but we, because we were girls, didn't go. We stayed at home and our friends would come over to our house or we would go to theirs, or we would go for long walks in the streets to pass the time. We stayed on the main roads that were paved. I went with my sisters and our friends.

When we ended the fast, we first ate sweets, to wish for a sweet new year, sweets with no lemon. Then we would drink lemonade and have biscuits with it; we bought those biscuits at the Jewish pastry shop, Almosnino. After that we had chicken in tomato sauce. There was no salad, just some fruit at the end as dessert. That's it, chicken with red sauce. No, before that we had a soup with angel hair pasta, and then the chicken. That's it.

Apple sweet, I make apple sweet without lemon, just sugar so that things will come sweetly. I grate the apple, then add sugar, approximately half the quantity of the apple and put it on a low fire. Then I taste it and, if need be, I add sugar. I never use specific measures.

We drink lemonade at Kippur because, it seems, it is good on an empty stomach. This is what we did as far as I can remember: have lemonade with biscuits. It seems that it is good for your stomach and prevents you from having to belch, or wanting to vomit. First the lemonade with the biscuits, then the soup, then the chicken with the red sauce. That was it, in every house the same thing, the same. This is a standard menu, if you take the book 'Les Fêtes Juives' [Jewish high holidays], this is what you will read.

Nobody taught me how to cook, you know how to cook without anyone teaching you, you look and you learn.

Pesach, I don't remember any more. We ate what you traditionally had to. The first night of Pesach my mother's brothers, Uncle David and Uncle Pepo, went to Aunt Rachelle and the second night, they would come to our house and we would have Pesach all together, and read the Haggadah, just like the first night. We read the Seder in Spanish, as we spoke in Spanish among us: 'He who says, this bread of slavery that our fathers eat in the land of Egypt.'

We eat matzah because on Pesach we don't eat bread. Matzah is bread that doesn't rise, and now we buy the matzah from the community. There used to be bakeries that made matzah in Thessaloniki when I was a child. It is not like now, that we have to buy matzah from the community. The Jewish population was so numerous that they made it here. They brought the matzah from the bakery, to the house and the pieces were so big that we had a special trunk to put it in, big pieces like 40 by 40 centimeters. and for eight days, during the whole period of Pesach, there was no bread in the house.

On Pesach we also make charoset. To be honest, nowadays I buy it ready from Daniel, a Jewish delicatessen shop and then at home, I taste it and say, 'Ah, what is missing? And I will put a little bit of this, of that, of orange peels ... because the one I bought is like mud, let me add a little bit of...'

Charoset is very complicated to make. There are a lot of things that you put in. In the old times we used to make it. You put orange peels, figs, plums, cracked nuts and dates, but no almonds, and a little bit of honey and sugar.

On Pesach we used to make burmoelos. When we finished dinner we had to have sweets and those were burmoelos; they are like donuts. First, you put a small cup of oil and a cup of water and you make them boil. When it is boiling you add a cup of matzah flour and take it off the heat and slowly you put six eggs until you get a firm dough and then you deep fry them. We fry them in olive oil.

When I was a child we had special frying pans that had hollow places in them, to put each burmoelo separately, but now we just put a spoon-full and it shapes itself on its own. Those are the burmoelos, and when they are well colored, we put them on a piece of paper, to absorb the oil, and then we put them in syrup and on a nice plate to be ready to serve. Many people put honey, but we make syrup. We also serve syrup separately so that everybody can add to his taste. The syrup is made from three quarters of a cup of sugar, 1 cup of water, 1 cup of orange juice and half a cup of lemon juice. You boil it until it is thick like honey and it is very, very tasty.

With matzah, people also make pastel [pitta]. You put one layer of matzah in a baking tin, wet it with water and some oil, and then, you put one layer of whatever you want - it can be minced meat or cheese with eggs, or something else you like - and more matzah on top and bake it in the oven; but in my house we didn't like it. It is heavy on the stomach.

We also made matzah soup. For the soup you take the juice from a chicken or lamb that we usually eat for Pesach and you break the matzah into pieces with your hands - not very small pieces - and when the juice is boiling you put it in. One minute is enough.

And after diner we sang many songs, all together, such as: 'There was a lamb that my father bought ...'

During Pesach we also baked eggs [huevos enchaminados]. There was a custom in Thessaloniki to visit relatives before Pesach. Visitors would come with their pockets already full of eggs that they were already given in the other houses, and by the end of the day, at their home, they had at least 15 of them. We didn't go to visit other houses. Girls didn't go, only men.

We prepared the house, we spread new embroideries, beautiful things, my mother put her jewelry on and visitors would come, dressed formally, and the house was shining. Everybody was in a hurry because there was another visit to make, and another, and another, but at least they came, and we saw each other, and we never lost contact.

For the Jewish high holidays there are many books. The book I have, 'Jewish high holidays,' gives you an explanation at first and then tells you what the Sephardic Jews eat and what the Ashkenazi Jews eat. Gefilte fish, we don't know. Gefilte fish, is the fish they, the Ashkenazi Jews, eat.

The Sephardim eat, instead of gefilte fish, what they call 'sazan,' which is fish in sauce. Sazan is a lake fish. They put the fish in a thick sauce with vinegar and leave it there. Also they used to take the caviar of the fish and make small balls and they put it with the rest of the fish. It is something that you eat whenever you feel like it. It is something you eat also cold. I never did because it is very heavy on the stomach.

During Sukkot, of course, we made a sukkah. My uncle Sinto, my father's brother, had a very big balcony, almost like a room; he made the sukkah and we all went there. They used to put blankets all around, in order to create a small room and then white sheets and pin white flowers all over. We sat there, we ate there, we saw each other, we talked, and it was very nice but we didn't sleep there.

My father went to the synagogue for every festivity, and we used to wait for him to come home, bring sweets and turn on all the lights in the house, for good luck. He brought home 'baissées,' special sweets made with eggs and sugar, which are completely white. He bought them at Almosnino, the Jewish pastry shop that was near our house and he came home. Then we went to our grandmother's, to kiss her hand and receive her blessings.

Sweets that we made at home were almond sweets, and quince sweets, as I told you. Now we don't make that kind of things any more. To make almond sweets you take a kilo of almonds, you boil them a little and then you peel them, so they become white, and then you mince them and you add half a kilo of powdered sugar, and the white part of two eggs, that you beat up so that they become fluffy as snow, and mix all of it well. Then you wet you hand with some water and lemon, so that the dough will not stick, and shape it into small pieces like children's fingers.

We also made Sotlach. We made a cream with rice flour and milk and sugar. We made this cream and then we put sugar in a pan, heated it, and let it become caramel and then we poured this hot cream inside the caramel and let it burn a little. It was very, very tasty.

At Chanukkah we lit the chanukkiyah, and that's it. And we sang 'Chanukkiyah dance with your aunt, Chanukkah dance with my grandmother.' That's all we did.

Bat mitzvah for the girls we did not do. As for bar mitzvah for the boys: our cousins had theirs at the synagogue and we all went, even the girls. We went to any synagogue they chose, but there was one here, in the neighborhood. Exactly where we now take the bus, it was the Bet Shaoul. The

one we go to now, the Monastirioton 9, was at Vardari and it was far from our house, and we didn't go there.

I don't remember any other synagogues than the Bet Shaoul, since the girls didn't go often. We went when there was a marriage, a celebration, or a festivity. Women didn't go to the synagogue as they do now.

Women, let alone girls, didn't go to funerals either, nor to the cemetery. When my grandfather Saltiel died they put black curtains outside his house that went all the way down to the floor, and they took my grandfather and they had the funeral, and then they came back home and sat on the floor for the Kria.

All the family, and they were many, and then they served a meal, and it was like a big fiesta, because all his grandchildren were there, and he had many grandchildren. Aunt Sol had nine children, Aunt Julia five, Aunt Berta two, uncle Avram two, we were three. Anyway, the table was extended, because everybody had to be seated, the grandchildren too.

My grandmother, sitting on the floor, for the Kria, when she saw that she said, 'Is Samuel dead or are we celebrating a wedding?' And she was right. You see, my grandfather Saltiel had asked, before he died, that people not wear black clothes at his funeral, so grandmother said, 'When I will die you will wear black clothes.' They did nothing, when grandmother died there was no way to do it, she died in Israel and was buried in a hush, hush way. I cannot give you details because I wasn't there any more. They didn't have a kria or anything. My grandmother died full of sorrow.

## Growing up

We were rather well off. We had a maid. We had maids that would live in the house and sleep in the house, all day and all night, and they were Jewish, all of them. Later, just before the war, we got one Christian from Ai Vat, but generally we had no strangers in our home. We had one, Paloma was her name, when she was feeling blue she would take a chair, put it on top of the trunk - we had a big trunk where we used to put our burning wood - and look at the tramway passing by.

We did not take care of finding husbands for them, they did that by themselves. We had a woman that came to do the washing, because all the washing was done by hand, and one day we asked her about her daughter and she said, 'She has a free love affair.' Now, can you see that this is nothing new? It has always existed.

Sterina was a maid we had when we were very young. She loved me very much and used to take me with her when she went to the grocer's. When she decided to leave us, well before the war, she went to Israel and got married there. When she got married she sent us a picture of her wedding. When I went to Israel during the occupation, she came to see me various times, with her kids, always happy and always at my service. She was in a good economical position; she was well.

My father, as I told you, was very strict and very severe and he wouldn't let us out of the house. Sometimes during the summer when we wanted to go to the movies, as we could not really lie, we used to tell him, 'We are going with Mr. Saporta.' Mr. Saporta was Raf, my friend Tida's brother, the one that married Eda after the war, and he was younger than us, and we went to Apollon, an open air movie theater. If my father had known that this so- called Mr. Saporta was Raf he would have

never permitted us to go.

We went to the movies, all the girls together, my friend Tida Saporta, another friend called Frida Benroubi, my sisters, their friends, and usually we went to Appolon as it was near our house. Other friends were Frida's sister Nita Benroubi and Matilde's friends, because the age difference was so small that we were all friends. Some of my sister's friends were Ida Arouesti, Sara Naar and Rita Naar, her sister. We were all together, just girls, there were no boys in our group.

What kind of movies did we watch? Well, not those erotic things we see now, never. They were adventure films mainly. I remember Greta Garbo was in some of the movies.

During the summer my mother, who suffered from her legs, used to go to Langada, a village near Thessaloniki, approximately 50 kilometers north- west, which had natural hot springs, to take baths. She went by carriage, stayed there as long as it took for a complete cure, and then came back. She would go and leave us alone at home. One of the girls would go with her, usually it was Matilde, sometimes Eda, and sometimes I, but I was calmer and because my father had a preference [faible] for me, I stayed behind. Things with me were calm, nice and I did not fight with anyone.

What kind of kids were we? Well, as I said, I was very calm, no doubt about it, but Matilde and Eda used to fight; they pushed each other. They were not very disciplined. I don't know why they fought but they did. They were more... well, how shall I put it, they reacted more than me, while I was more patient. However. sometimes it is hard not to quarrel. On Saturday - I told you already that on Saturday we went to the movies - I took peanuts and piled them and prepared them, to take them with me to the movies and all of a sudden Matilde would take everything and, of course, there was a huge quarrel.

Eda was probably even naughtier than Matilde. My mother didn't know what to do with her, so she put her in the bathroom and locked the door, and Eda would kick and scream to get out. 'Let me out, let me out, I will be a good girl.' I don't remember what she did to be locked up.

I told you, my father slapped me only once and I was sick of rage for three weeks. 'How could he hit me?' I don't even remember why he slapped me. I remember that as I was sick Miss Morley, my American teacher from Anatolia [College] 10, came home to visit and see why I wasn't going to school and how I was doing.

When Miss Morley came my aunt Julia was at home. Aunt Julia was my father's sister, Julia Saltiel, who also married a Saltiel, Avram Saltiel. Well, Miss Morley says, in her best Greek, 'How are you?' and Aunt Julia replies in her best Spanish, 'Tell her I don't speak English.'

Other sicknesses? My mother, after giving birth to Eda, had some kind of a problem and every time she had her period she suffered a lot, was in great pain and didn't leave the house. I remember that she used to put towels with some kind of medicine on her belly to help her. I don't think she took any pills.

When Eda was young she got scarlet fever and they sent Matilde and me to my aunt Mitza's house, and my uncle Pepo's nanny came to our home to sit next to Eda and take care of her. We didn't see our parents throughout this period because they were afraid of contaminating us. We lived with Uncle Pepo and Aunt Mitza, and Eda was at home with Father and Mother.

I also remember that once, I was very sick. We had a very good doctor, but I could not see, I think it was typhus I had. And once they put me in a warm bath to lower my very high fever and it felt so cold! Well, you know what it's like when you have a fever...

We did not go for vacation apart from my mother's stays at the hot springs. Our house was on the sea, not looking out onto the sea but right on the shores; so we didn't feel the need of going elsewhere.

I went to the French school here in Thessaloniki, the Lycee Francais. I finished the Mission Laique Francaise and then I went to the American school, Anatolia College. I never went to a Jewish or a Greek school. My sister Matilde first went to the French school and then to 'Cshina,' a Greek private school for girls. That's why she knows better Greek than me.

There was a law 11 that said that we could not continue our schooling, as we had started. The law said that, all foreign citizens were obliged to go to the Greek elementary school, and then do as they wished. We were Spanish citizens, therefore we had to change schools. Matilde was about to finish the French school so she went to the Greek one afterwards.

Normally, I should also have been included but because I was very advanced in my studies, as compared to my age, my father didn't want to interfere and I was free to go as planed: finish the French school and then go to the American School.

Eda, on the other hand, was very young, still at elementary school, so she was sent to the Greek school immediately. She was put in the 5th grade, the corresponding class of the French school she used to go to, but she didn't know any Greek, so my father asked her teacher at school to tutor her for some time until she would be ready.

This teacher was Miss Evgenia and she used to say to my father, 'It is a pity, Mr. Saltiel, to push her so much, she is so young. Why start in the 5th grade, when she knows no Greek.' Anyway, Eda started her Greek lessons, and by the middle of the school year she was the best in her class, and Miss Evgenia said, 'You were right, Mr. Saltiel, you were right.'

We always knew there were other religions. We knew, we saw them, heard them, even in the neighborhood. In the Mission Laique Francaise we were not only Jews; we had an Armenian schoolmate, Irini Lazian, and also a Greek girl.

We didn't have any close relations with the Christians. Of course, I had Christian schoolmates and we saw each other sometimes outside school but there were no close relations. Nevertheless we had no exterior characteristics that would differentiate us from the rest of the Greek population either in our dressing code or in our behavior. They couldn't tell us apart.

When we went to school we dressed in a blue uniform with a white collar. At school we also studied Greek, but the way that now, they teach English at Greek schools. Everything was in French and we had two hours of Greek per week.

Surely there were teachers that you like or dislike more than others but I don't remember any of them. I was a very good student with regards to all subjects; I didn't like or dislike any. I was good everywhere.

At some point, when we finished school, we went on a five-day excursion with the Anatolia College; all the girls of my class and my teacher. We were 13-14 girls, three of us were Jewish: Germain Alvo, Roza Kohen, who now is married and lives in Athens, and me. What did I think of it? It was normal. I had finished school and went on a trip with everybody else. We went to Olympia and we saw wonderful things that I couldn't even imagine I would ever see, since my father was very strict. [Olympia: major archaeological site. In the center of Peloponnesus was the temple of Olympia where the Olympic Games were held in antiquity.]

I thought nothing of not sleeping at home; I was in good company, I was not alone, and I was with all the girls and my teacher, who were my daily companions.

Matilde, although she was older than me, didn't go on an excursion, because at the French school they didn't have a tradition of going on an excursion after finishing school; it was just the Anatolia College that did it.

At Anatolia we also celebrated the so-called commencement and we all dressed in white and everything. [Commencement: an event organized by Anatolia College every year, upon the graduation of its new alumni; something like the debutantes' ball.] My dress for the commencement was pleated all over and it had a big belt. You can see it in the picture that is still hanging in the hall of the school today.

We also used to wear hats; we called them 'shishia.' I had a green one, a very nice one. We wouldn't go out of the house without a hat. The hat, the scarf, the gloves. Yes, we also wore gloves. If only you knew how many gloves we knitted during the war! I cannot start telling you how many we knitted for the soldiers at the beginning of the war.

Our hair, at that time, we used to comb it a little rolling out at the edge. I had long tresses and I used to roll them on my ears, like telephones, as they would say. My sisters had no 'telephones.' I don't remember when I cut them off. To have a hair cut we went to a hairdresser, and my mother came with us. We had good legs then. It is only now that the hairdresser comes to our home because we cannot move properly any longer.

Books, other's than the ones for school, we didn't really read. My father read things related to the religion. He was not a fanatic but he read because he wanted to be well informed. In the evening we would all sit together and each of us did his/her own thing. Studying, reading, sewing...

Matilde used to play the piano. Almost eight hours a day on the piano. And now, nothing! She used to play the piano many hours a day. I had also started learning it but I had no patience to sit down and practice and I gave it up. Matilde had started learning with Lily Abravanel, who later on went to Paris and got married there.

Lily Abravanel was my mother's cousin: her father and my mother's father were brothers. Her father's name was Lazar. Lily went to the Catholic school 'Les Soeurs de Calamari,' and she had been influenced by them. They found her once, wearing a nun's hat [cornet] that she had made herself, and to protect her they sent her to Paris. In Paris she changed her religion, and married a Christian.

She had a daughter, who is a language teacher, and a son, who was working for the French electricity company, and another son, whose occupation I don't know, but he looks just like my

uncle Leon.

She never told her children that she was Jewish and now there is a big mess about it because there is a Lazar Abravanel in Israel. He is the grandson of Lazar Abravanel, my mother's grandfather's brother, who in 1918 and 1920 was sent to Turkey with the Greek army and never came back. He deserted and went to Israel and stayed there and got completely cut off from the rest of the family. Now this Lazar Abravanel started looking for his relatives and his family and found out about his roots from Thessaloniki and through the computer [Internet] he was able to trace Lily's children in Paris and this created a whole mess.

At home we had no gramophone. My grandmother Abravanel had one and we went to visit her almost every Saturday. There, we would listen to music, classical music and all the songs that were en vogue then. There, we also found all the magazines because my uncle David, who lived with Grandmother, used to buy all the magazines considered serious. When we went to see my grandmother, my aunt Rachelle would also come with her children and the family united. They lived at one end of the city, the Vardari area, and we at the other end. My grandmother used to prepare separate food for everybody, whatever he/she liked, just to make us all happy. We found there good food, music, magazines, warmth. We were very happy to visit my grandmother.

The dreams that we had at that period were simple, young girls' dreams. It was normal that we were going to get married and found our own families. But in reality I couldn't see how we were going to get married because at that time you had to give a dowry and I don't know if my father could have afforded three dowries. Marriages were combined and bargained.

I don't know if I would have been able to marry then. And first of all there was absolute priority, for instance I couldn't marry before Matilde, she had to marry first since she was the oldest and then it was my turn and then Eda's, and this is why all the attention was given to her. Matilde always had to be very well dressed, by the famous fashion dressmakers, and her underwear was hand-embroidered and this and that...

Personal liking had nothing to do with marriage. Personal liking is only when you are not pressed to give a dowry and I don't know what else. I don't know anybody who got married without a dowry before the war.

Since we had no brothers we had no contact with boys. It was only later, at the beginning of the war, when we started living in the same house with Aunt Rachelle, with her sons, Nadir and Elio, and her daughters, Silvia and Renée, that we started having our first contacts with boys. The boys who were their friends.

Of course it was on my personal agenda to work. When I finished school I had already taken typing and stenography lessons. I had already applied for work at a petroleum oil company, and there were high chances I would have gotten the job had it not been for the war.

Matilde, she was stuck to her piano. At least eight hours a day she played. This is what she wanted to do. Eda was still very young, too young to work. My father, although he didn't like the idea of me working, didn't say anything because we needed the money. His shop had been burned down. I don't remember if it was in 1934 or 1935 but we were very short of money. My uncle David, my mother's brother, is the one that supported us and gave the money to my father to restart his

business. Uncle David was such a nice man! He opened a bank account, in my mother's name, so that she wouldn't have to ask whenever she needed something.

My father's partner was my uncle Avran who had a very rich father-in-law and didn't care about anything. His father-in-law was Mr. Angel. My uncle Avran married my aunt Regina who was his cousin, Regina Angel, the daughter of one of my grandfather's sisters. It was not just my father's shop that burned down, it was the whole neighborhood, but unfortunately his was the last one for them to put out the fire. In this neighborhood were all the shops that sold construction wood, on Santaroza Street.

I have the impression that everybody was a Jew there, all the construction wood was sold by Jews; because my uncle Sinto, was also there, and my uncle Daniel, and my uncle Avran. Only my uncle Mentesh and uncle Sabetai were in the glass business. They sold widow glasses, mirrors etc.

I don't know any kind of job that was not done by Jews. No. They did everything and when we had a riot here and they burned down the houses in the Campbell district 12 - well, if you can call them houses, they were tin-huts, really - all the people who lived there and worked mainly in the port of Thessaloniki, decided, after the riot, to leave for Israel. They went to Haifa and built the port there, and the reason the port of Haifa exists, is because of them.

What I remember from Campbell is that my father had to take two buses to go to work, because his shop was very far away, compared to our house, and it was very early in the morning, and my mother stood on the balcony watching him going away, until he disappeared, and I felt something odd, a fear in my heart, without realizing what exactly was going on. I didn't ask any questions but everybody was scared. Proof of this fear is that they left. We didn't talk about it at home, not at all.

## During the War

When the war with the Italians 13 was declared we moved to my aunt Mitza's house on Gravias Street. I don't know why we moved there, but my uncle Pepo and my aunt Mitza were in Athens, for some reason unknown to me. At their house were my uncle Leon and my aunt Mitza's sister, Silvia, with her husband Mr. Margaritis, my aunt Rachelle with her family, and all of us.

Our contribution to the war was knitting. We made socks and gloves for the soldiers. I don't know to whom we gave them but we knitted day and night. Me, my sisters, my friends, all of us sitting around and knitting for the soldiers in Albania.

Those soldiers were freezing and when they came back they had frozen fingers and frozen toes. I knew somebody named Saqui, he came back from the front with frozen legs and I don't remember if they amputated them or not but this was the issue. After the war he left for Israel and never came back.

Knitting and singing the patriotic song that Vembo 14 sang: 'Stupid Mussolini, nobody will stay, you and your ridiculous country, you are all afraid of our khaki colors [Greek military uniform].' We believed in those songs, we were impressed by them, Vembo was great, and we were putting all our souls into those songs.

When the Italians were defeated by the Greeks, the Germans, who were their allies, came rushing, to solve the problem! To save the face. I have a vague memory of that. I know that we were living at aunt Mitza's house, and the first day the Germans entered Salonica, they confiscated the house. We were all scared, obliged to move out, and find another house very quickly. They came and confiscated the house, I saw them but I didn't see them. I was so afraid. When they confiscated the house, they also confiscated my father's shop, and in exchange, they gave him some kind of a paper - I don't know where it is now - and we never got any kind of compensation for that.

I know that they confiscated all the important Jewish shops; they went to Alvo and emptied everything. He sold baths, and tiles, sanitary supplies and wires. For days German trucks were emptying it.

We moved here, to this neighborhood, just across the street from where we are now. The name of the street was Mizrahi and not Fleming as it is now. It was a big house that we rented, across Solono's house, who I didn't know at the time. Of course there were food rations. We went to the baker and were given a piece of moist 'bobota' [bread made of corn; during World War II it was the only one available and was part of the food ration]. One piece, not one loaf of bread each; the portions we could take were according to the members of the family.

Later on, when we moved into the ghetto with my aunt Rashel and her family we made our own bread. I don't know were we found the flour; it was the boys, Elio and Nadir, who took care of that.

We knew what was going on from the radio. We had an amazing radio and we could hear everything, even Vembo's songs.

We had no contact with the Germans. Somehow, because we were Spanish citizens, we felt protected, since we knew that Spain was an ally of Germany. What did I feel the first time I saw a German? I cannot see meanness; I cannot see it in the first glance. They looked normal, like normal people with nothing special, nothing to make you want to turn your head away.

We heard nothing about the camps, nothing about the concentration camps because they concealed it very well. And our rabbi, who was from Germany, maybe he knew, maybe he was aware of what was going on, but he chose not to speak. Rabbi Koretz. We thought that we were going to work and then come back.

People were so fooled that, even the money they had - when they were deported - they gave to the Germans, taking in exchange either Polish zloty or some kind of paper saying it was due to them, and they were going to cash it at the end of the trip. What did we know? We had no idea what concentration camps were. No idea! Some people had come from abroad, from outside Greece, and were saying some things but we couldn't imagine it. Our minds were not able to conceive it. We thought that they were telling stories.

Mrs. Kounio parents' had come from Austria but they were much older than us and we had no real contact with them. We could not form an opinion, because we didn't know enough to understand, and anyway, when the powerful want to fool you they do. They have the means to do it. We didn't know, and the people that came and told us we didn't believe. It was simply inconceivable. What they were telling us was impossible to digest, it was not real, and it couldn't have been real. They were not lying, they were gravely exaggerating. Or so we thought.

I had a schoolmate that was married in Yugoslavia, Bella, and when the Germans entered Yugoslavia she came back to Salonica to her mother, and she also had a little girl named Ettika with the most beautiful red - very red - hair. And they came here and they didn't have anything to eat, and her husband started selling small things, such as buttons, pins, handkerchiefs and things like that, and he was going from one house to the other to make some money, and buy bread. They had no bread, but Bella was smoking. When I went to Israel, I started smoking too, and all of a sudden I remembered Bella, how they had no bread but had to smoke, and I said to myself, 'Am I crazy? I quit on the spot.

Bella told us that when the Germans came they took everything. She told us of atrocities, but it was just in our imagination that we could see things like that. And then the order came to wear a star, and everybody wore a star. I don't know what would have happened if you didn't wear one. I didn't wear one. I was Spanish.

Then the Germans gave the order that Jews had to move into the ghettos. In Salonica we had never had a ghetto. We moved again, this time with my aunt Rashel, my mother's sister and her children. We went into the ghetto, with our own people, although I'm not sure that as Spanish citizens we had to. We felt more protected, as Spanish, since when they gathered the others, they didn't dare touch the Spanish.

Nina Benroubi probably didn't move into the ghetto. Her family name is Revah and the Spanish consul was married to a Revah from the same family. The name of the Spanish consul was Ezrati and he was Jewish too. I have letters of him and sometimes I wonder how we managed, writing letters, seeing the consul, the ambassador, etc.

Of course, we were scared at first. What am I saying. Not at first. It was after that we started being really scared - when people started disappearing, when we had to go to the ghetto, when we could not move around any more. How can you not be scared when you don't know one day what the next day will bring you, what will happen to you.

My father, when we were in the ghetto, was already sick and my mother had died. My mother had a small operation; she had a polypus that had to be removed. Since it was during the occupation my father took her to a private clinic for the surgery, and he was so precautious, so afraid that something would happen to her, that he took a stove to her room, to keep her warm, and he bought alcohol, and he sat in my mother's room, and whoever came in was obliged to clean his hands with alcohol, to be disinfected.

The operation was successful but the patient died. The operation was done during the German occupation and nobody took care of her, nobody came to see how she was doing, or to help her get up, or anything, and she got pneumonia and died. When the doctor saw her, he said that if she could make it to midnight she would survive. She passed away at five to midnight. It is written somewhere when exactly she died.

Then there was the funeral but I didn't go to it. The day she died, and there was the funeral, there was a terrible, terrible snow storm. It was snowing heavily and it was bitter cold, and they came to the house, and they took her, and I didn't even see her, and we did nothing about it. They took her, in a hurry, because they had to walk to the cemetery and come back before the night, and they buried her there. The men of the family took care of that. My uncle Sinto, her brother, his son

Samuel, my father ... only men. We were girls, we couldn't do anything, we didn't go to funerals, and we didn't go to the cemetery. It is only now that it is fashionable for the women to go to the funerals. After the funeral we had the kria, at home, and everything was done as it should be, because we still had a certain freedom.

When the Germans took our cemetery 15 they had to unbury her, take the remains out of the tomb, and put her in the new cemetery, in the same grave with my grandfather and everybody was very upset and felt uneasy and afraid but what could we do? We had no power, nothing, no way we could defend ourselves.

At the beginning, when we entered the ghetto, we were afraid. Actually, not exactly in the beginning. Later, when we had to wear the star, when they started picking up people, making them disappear, limiting free movement ... You could not but feel afraid not knowing what will happen to you from one day to the other.

As for myself, I wasn't moving at all. It was due to my father, who was sick. He had cancer. He went through a period when he had a fever every evening, and it was only when his condition started to deteriorate, that the cancer was diagnosed, but they couldn't do anything about it.

During that period we were renting a home on Broufa Street together with Aunt Rashelle and her kids. It was in the ghetto. I have no idea how the limits of the ghetto were defined... We, the girls, didn't leave the house, but the others were moving around, within the ghetto. Food? We were buying it from the shops that were in the ghetto.

The other Jews were wearing the yellow star but I never put it on. I was a Spanish subject and they were not after us. None of our family wore the yellow star, despite the fact that we were living within the ghetto. I don't know for sure if other people that had no yellow star could move out of the ghetto. I was confined to our house, with my father, and had no particular wish to go out either.

Although we were feeling some sort of liberty of movement, compared to the others, we didn't make use of it, and whoever wanted to see us came to our place. All of Nadir's friends were coming, that is Toto Benies, Solon Molho, Davi Frances, and Senegal, who was the funniest of all. Actually his name was Rousso but his nickname was Senegal. You see he was going to the port, to have fun with the fishermen, and as his hair was very, very curly, one fisherman called him Senegal, the only African thing he could recall, and that became his name for all of us. Nobody would call him any other name and I think that, not even he himself would have responded to any other name.

This group of friends was coming to our place almost every evening. We had all sorts of discussions, we had fun, we were singing and sometimes we used to play games, all kind of childish games, and sometimes we played cards. We played cards with the neighbor downstairs, Isaac was his name. You see, he would get passionate in his desire to win while we didn't really care, so one would go behind him, see his cards and step on the foot or give another sign and Mr. Isaac would lose. I don't know why we liked to tease him but we were all very young and full of life, and we had to have a diversion from all the horrible things that we were suffering.

I cannot recall the first time I went dancing but I find it quite improbable that I would have gone alone, that is, without my sister. As we had no brother and our father was very strict we had

nobody to take us dancing. Probably it was during this period that it first occurred with Nadir, Toto and the others, or it could have been at home where we listened to the music on the radio and probably danced.

We had a lady neighbor, of German roots, who was always complaining and shouting at us about the music, always wanting us to be quiet. Regarding anti-Semitism all I can recall is a servant from AiVat 16 that we had at home, who once couldn't control herself and said, 'You Jews deserve it.' When exactly this happened I cannot recall. She was referring to all the rules and limitations we were forced to follow.

Let me tell you another story. Aunt Mitsa had a cook who had two daughters. One of them got married and came to visit us on Broufa Street and she was crying. 'What is wrong, Eftihia?' we asked her. 'I'm not a lucky person at all,' she told us, and continued, 'A friend of mine entered a deserted house and she found it furnished and with everything in it and I cannot find anything.' And she was crying. Crying while telling us that she couldn't find an empty, furnished Jewish house!

My grandmother was deaf, because of the fall of the Zeppelin that was shot down in Thessaloniki during World War I, and since they didn't want to shout the names, particularly in front of the four-year-old son of uncle Sabetai, they would use nicknames like the 'the big grinch' and 'the small grinch' in order to talk. The big grinch was Hitler and the small grinch was Mussolini 17 and her grandson, who was four years old at the time, was telling her, and showing her, putting his little hands on top of the other, indicating, 'not even a stone on top of another will remain,' and this is exactly what actually happened.

We were afraid, actually very afraid, scared, particularly since we knew that they could come anytime, knock at your door, grab you and take you away. I don't remember to whom exactly this happened, but there were many rumors about who was caught, who was taken out of the ghetto, people that nobody knew what had become of them etc.

A few days after the death of our mother, it was probably my sister Matilde who had the idea to organize a white marriage between our father and Aunt Rachelle, our mother's sister, so that she could acquire the Spanish nationality in order to be somewhat better protected.

This white marriage didn't take place in the synagogue. I don't know where, probably in the house, and I have the document from the Spanish consulate. Nobody would go to the synagogue for such a marriage. My father was already quite sick, he was lying in bed, and he would do whatever we would tell him. So Aunt Rachelle became Spanish, but not her children.

During that period a second marriage was quite rare. You see, people wouldn't divorce. People would normally accept all sorts of conditions in order not to divorce, which is not happening now.

If a wife died, and she had a sister, they would try to marry her husband to the wife's sister, etc. Every effort would be made, so that people wouldn't be left alone. There are physical needs that have to be dealt with, and such moves should keep the families closely connected. It is better than leaving people wander, like street dogs.

This was the period of our friendly group. We were staying at home and every evening the 'group' would come home to keep us accompany. Nadir and his friends Solon, Totos and the others were there every night. They were all making their best efforts to make us laugh, by saying whatever

would come to their minds. This is how I became friends with Solon and later our friendship turned into love.

Nadir was by nature a funny fellow, and together with Senegal they would play theatrical sketches for our benefit. There may even exist photographs of Nadir, wearing a round hat and long trousers, just like Charlie Chaplin. This is what they were doing, making fools of themselves, trying to make us laugh and put some humor in our lives.

There was also Bob. Bob was the son of a friend of Aunt Rachelle who lived in the Vardari area. He also was included in the company. Now he lives in Israel but a few years ago he came to see me here, in Thessaloniki.

This is how we witnessed the departure from Thessaloniki: The people who were gathered, were leaving with a small valise, or a small sack, walking without knowing where they were going. And, as we learned later, when they reached the railway station they were told to leave their money here, since it wouldn't be valid at their destination, and this is how they would take even their money. All this we learned from descriptions by others since we were staying at home and didn't experience any of this first-hand. We were living in an empty Jewish neighborhood. When they collected all the other Jews, we remained in this house.

The difference between the Germans and the Italians was that the Italians were human. They helped us at this point. It was them who provided us with the proper false papers, in order to travel to Athens, which was under Italian occupation at the time.

This is when Aunt Rachelle decided to go to Israel with Elio and the rest of her children and so she did, in two steps. First three of the children, Nadir, Silvia and Rene left, and later the rest of the family, that is, she and Elio.

All our relatives were Spanish subjects. The Germans had no right to take Spanish subjects to the concentration camps but, all the same, they were all gathered and sent to a concentration camp, with no forced labor. Later they were taken to a camp in Spain, then to a camp in North Africa, in Casablanca, Morocco, and later they were taken to Israel. All of them, with the exception of our father, my sisters and I, who had made an application to the German 'commandature' and asked for an exemption since our father was suffering from cancer, and somehow we were left alone.

This Italian man, Neri, helped us greatly since when they finally came for us, he managed to put Eda, our younger sister, with our father on a train to Athens, and a few days later Matilde and myself.

The decision to leave for Athens was made when we realized that we couldn't take proper care of our father. This Italian guy, Neri, who was working in the Italian consulate, agreed to prepare the proper documents for us to travel to Athens. It was my sister Matilde who went to him, and took care of all the proper documents. Was it Neri who came to our place or Matilde who went to his office? I'm not sure, since I was fully occupied with our sick father. According to these documents, we were Italian citizens, and these documents were to be given directly to the train commander.

This is how our father and Eda left for Athens. Eda and our father left while Matilde and myself left the apartment, we were living in, and went to stay at the place of a girl that was a manicurist. She put us up in a bedroom and we were there all day and all night, with the shutters closed. You see,

she was a Christian and her father, who was living in the same house, knew nothing about us. She was bringing us food and we were waiting for when our turn would come to leave for Athens. The girls' name was Angela, simply Angela, no last name. We stayed there more than a week.

Matilde and I were left to leave last. They told us to come to the railway station at a particular date and time. The Italians were in charge of the train, we were with the Italians and we embarked on our journey on it. We had no papers since they were all given to the train commander. The train was supposed to stop at Plati or some other station after it. It was stopped well before for the Germans to control it. It seems that they guessed that something was happening in that train and we knew nothing, not even our names on our false papers or birth dates or anything. The only thing we were taught to say in Italian was, 'The train commander has all the free passages.'

And the moment comes that the Germans get into the train. All the passengers, we were asleep, and it seems that the train commandant took care of the Germans, gave him the papers and finally they got off the train again.

This train left with at least a whole wagon of Jews. Among others there were Rosa, who lives in Athens, the one who remarried, Charliko Joseph, she was first married to Marcel Nagari. All her family was in this wagon.

There were also young Italian soldiers in that train. One of them seemed to like me particularly and he asked to meet me in Athens but with so much fear, no room was left for flirting.

We arrived in Athens and went to a house in Magoufana, a suburb of Athens - Lefki today - a house offered to us by a monk from Mount Athos. The area was full of small farms, and this monk was coming every week, and we would open all the doors as he would pray, so that the entire neighborhood would listen. Once an airplane passed close by and I said to Matilde, 'Adio, Mary look!' You see, we were very easy to be spotted by someone who was after us.

At this place at Magoufana we were not alone. There was also Toto and two of his sisters. One of them was later deported and never came back, the other one married a Christian called Mikes, a member of the yachting club, and his children still live here in Thessaloniki. Toto also had another sister who had a slight mental disability and was not with us in Athens. She was also deported and never came back.

We stayed at Magoufana for quite some time. We were washing the sheets by hand and our hands would bleed, and when this priest saw the condition of our hands, he told us how to wash 'cloth against cloth' and how to tumble it. We would start at one end and fight our way to the other. In a minute he showed us how to do it, and it was simple.

This priest was called Father Kissarios. He would come to visit us every week at this little house, in Magoufana, with the farm and the vines. We were left with no money, and later it was Paul Noah who paid my share to the partisans. I suppose that this house in Magoufana must also have been paid for, but I don't know by whom.

Normally we would walk from Magoufana to Kifissia, a distance of approximately 13 kilometers. In order to purchase medicine for our father. We would walk in the dark, in the loneliness, with dogs barking and no papers, but at the pharmacy they would give us what we asked for.

The only outside contact we had was Elios, my cousin, who was hidden in a room on 3rd September Street with his mother, our aunt Rachelle. Later, when they left for Israel, we lost contact for a while.

It was quite lonely in Magoufana, so when Elios and Aunt Rachelle left for Israel we decided to go to Athens, to their place on 3rd September Street, which now was empty. First, our sick father was taken and the rest of us walked for a whole night from Magoufana to Athens. Thank God we had no unfortunate adventure, but we were walking all night, and it's a long walk!

So we stayed in Athens with our father. In the room we had a big container where our father could sit and make, whatever it was he had to make, and then, he was moved to an armchair, from the armchair to his container and back. It wasn't easy. We, the three sisters, were using the house toilet, which belonged to another family but I cannot recall their name.

One night a group of traitors came with the Germans, a quisling Jew and three Germans, to arrest Elios, who was living there before us. They didn't find him but they found us, who were Spanish citizens. At this time they had already deported all the Spanish citizens, and when they realized the situation that we were facing with the sickness of our father, they decided to take the two girls and leave one behind so she could take care of him.

Since I was the one with more patience in dealing with our father, I was left alone in taking care of him, and my sisters were taken away. They said they were taking them to check our papers etc but they didn't say where. During those moments you cannot think or feel. You are faced with fate, you live an accomplished act, and there is nothing you can do. I was left with the impression that my sisters would return but instead of that, after a short visit to the Gestapo, they were held in the military barracks at Haidari 18, a prison for all kind of people. This I learned, of course, only after the end of the war.

While we were still all together, taking care of our father, there was this lady, Mrs. Lembessi, who was the wife of an air force officer, who was helping us continuously. She happened to live in the same apartment block as Ida Asseo, who was a cousin of my best friend Tida Saporta, and she took us under her wing, always trying to help us.

Mrs. Lembessi was following closely the evolution of my father's health. She communicated with the doctor who was following his condition almost daily. The day my father died, Mrs. Lembessi was at our place at eight o'clock in the morning, having already been informed, by the doctor, that in his opinion it was quite improbable that he could last any longer.

He died exactly 13 days after my sisters were taken away. It happened early in the morning, while I was feeding him in bed and he refused to open his mouth. He turned his head aside and died.

Mrs. Lembessi was there to help me. She told me not to worry. It was the doctor that informed her and she was here now and she would take care of everything. She cleaned and dressed the body and then she went to telephone the Spanish Embassy. A little later some men came on behalf of the embassy; they told us to undress the body, wash it and put it in a sheet. Once again Mrs. Lembessi told me not to worry and went alone to do whatever was asked. Then we waited for a little and they took the body. They didn't tell us where they were taking him.

Mrs. Lembessi, once again, took over and took me, almost by force, since I was not in a position to think, to stay at her place telling me that, I should never return to this apartment, were my father had died. That same night the Germans returned for me, but I had fled.

What Mrs. Lembessi actually did was to ask her daughter to sleep on the floor so that I could have her bed. I cannot recall how many days I stayed there but she took very good care of me and even her husband was pressing me to drink some wine with my lunch every day since I was very weak. Mrs. Lembessi is included on the list of the Righteous Among the Nations 19.

Then it was time to worry, with the assistance of Toto, how we would leave the county. I have no idea where Toto was during all this period. I suppose he was somewhere around watching over us in his own way. I was staying at Mrs. Lembessi's, who would see that Toto was after me, and madly in love with me, and she would advise me not to marry him, because he didn't seem to her to be of the same value as me. All that love seemed improper to her. Mrs. Lembessi knew nothing about Toto's sister and her mental disability.

Following the instructions given to Toto, we went on Good Friday, the one preceding Easter, in the evening, to a place where a lorry, sent by the resistance, was expected to pick us up and take us to Evoia 20. Everything was arranged by Toto in agreement with the partisans.

At this place arrived all the people who wanted to leave Greece: there was Paul Noah and his wife Rita and their young daughter, Lela Nahmias, the wife of Moise Nahmias, who was one of Solon's friends, and many others whose names I don't remember. We were all scattered and the appointment was at a coffee shop where the lorry would come to pick us up. I was sitting with Toto at this coffee shop and we waited and waited and waited and nobody arrived. At some point it became clear that nobody was coming. We were very, very disappointed, and we had to return.

We were later informed that they couldn't manage to come and pick all of us up, and that half of the people were left behind. A few days later we received the message that it was this coming Friday, at the same place, that the lorry would come. Once again we went to the same place, we found the same people and at long last we got into the lorry.

The funny thing is that the driver wouldn't start the engine unless I would wave to him. Of course, I didn't want to do it but the social pressure of all the other passengers was such that I had no choice but to do it and quickly we went off...

With this lorry we went from Athens to the land across from Evoia. It was night when we started out; it was night when we arrived. Everything was very dark and we had to cross the sea to go to Evoia and the Germans had a big searchlight, searching the sea, and we entered little boats, and we had to be very quiet and paddle very silently and finally we arrived in Evoia.

It was during early summer and when we arrived in Evoia it was still very dark. We had to climb a big mountain in order to arrive where the partisans were. This is when, forced to walk what seemed an eternity, I started having blisters on my feet that same day, because I was wearing sandals.

Once we were up there, we were taken to a big room. The floor was not bare ground, it was maybe mosaic or marble, I don't remember, and there were some stinking blankets and we had to sleep there.

It was full of people. A lot of Jews. No, not a lot, everybody was a Jew; Jews that we knew and Jews we didn't know. Yvonne said, 'It's been three weeks that we are here,' and I panicked, only trying to imagine to spend three weeks up there!

We tried to sleep and at four o'clock in the morning they started shouting at us that the boat to take us across to Turkey had arrived and we had to hurry, hurry. Those people had been waiting three weeks and the boat came the same night we arrived!

Since we were up the mountain they gave us mules to take us down. Not for everybody of course; some would walk and others would go on the mules. We knew nothing about mules. The women who sat on the mules the 'cowboy way' by the time we arrived down there, had started bleeding, from the friction, from the animal's movement. Happily enough I sat sideways, you know, two feet together like in a side-saddle and I suffered much less.

When we arrived at the sea, to our big surprise, we found even more people, probably coming from other shelters, and children and old people and all of them were Jews. The partisans had long beards and I was very scared, to be honest you were scared only to look at them. And they gave us a 'lesson.' And what was the lesson? They gathered us and told us that they had caught a guy lying and put a knife here and took it out there: right through his throat. Now if you feel like lying or anything else, think twice.

Of course, the partisans were armed and they had big, long beards and they had bullets all around their belts and chest and... The same night we got up at 3 or 4 in the morning. They called us because the fishermen boat had come. We hardly stayed on the mountain at all. We just slept a little wrapped in a blanket on the floor. We didn't have the time to worry about what to eat, or where to eat, or how or where to wash, how to organize ourselves. We left immediately; we didn't stay three weeks like the others.

They asked for money. They said that whatever you have leave it here because for you it is useless, your money has no value from here on. This was not true, but people left their money there.

As for me, I had nothing to leave. My fee for the trip was paid by Paul Noah and he also gave me some money, because I had nothing. I had no money at all, hardly any clothes, no relatives around me, I had nothing, nothing at all.

I don't know how Paul did it - how he paid the partisans - but I know he did and he paid for Toto too, and I cannot tell you the amount because I was not directly involved in the act; it was Toto who took care of those things. I know that I am in dept to Paul.

We got into the small fishing boat. Except for myself and Toto there was also Mois Nahmias. Rita and Paul Noah with their daughter and Bob were not with us, they had left earlier and everything happened very, very quickly, and when we arrived in Turkey we were already expected there.

Nadir, Silvia and Rene, my cousins, had decided, long before us, to form a group of their own with two of the Noah children. They also left with the partisans but they never arrived. We have no idea whether they were betrayed, whether the boat was sunk, when and how they died, who caught them, etc. Up to this day nobody knows what really happened.

Anyway, so we entered the boat and we were crammed in the hold. We were less than fifty people, close to thirty. As the boat left, due to the stormy sea, people started vomiting. We had some containers, like buckets, and when they were full somebody would lift them up, throw the content in the sea and give them back to us.

I decided I that I couldn't stay in there anymore. I couldn't breathe. I wasn't seasick so I climbed to the deck and sat in a corner. The captain, a 23-year-old man - I was 20 at the time - saw me and told me that he had his own small cabin and I could go and rest there. All this happened without any effort from my side to charm him. No effort whatsoever.

This way I traveled rather distant from the rest of the passengers, having a place of my own. Toto was also out of the hold and our young captain very efficiently reached the coast of Turkey.

We arrived early in the morning at a place called Tsesme 21, and the captain would take each one of us and carry us one by one to dry land by walking in the sea and when he had brought the last of us he told us to walk ten minutes in a particular direction and wait there, as there were people coming to pick us up. The sun had not risen yet when he and his boat were gone.

A little later Greek people, representing the Greek state, came and took us to a coffee shop where they offered us breakfast. They were from the Greek consulate and they were there to assist us. I cannot recall if we met any Turks.

After we had our breakfast they put us on a train. I remember the train vividly and we were taken to a sort of camp where there were soldiers, Greeks and others. Of course, there were also many Jews.

We decided to look for Paul and Rita who had been loaded on another boat earlier. When we asked, we were told that they had not arrived yet despite the fact that they had left Greece a week earlier than us. We were very worried but one week later they arrived. You see, their captain had a girlfriend on an island and he took the boat with the passengers there, and in order to be with his girlfriend he stayed on the island for a week or ten days and, of course, the passengers stayed in the hold having extreme difficulty with food and the water and all.

What I can say for sure is that our captain was much more efficient in that respect, and brave, and within one or two days he took us to Turkey while the others that had departed one week earlier arrived ten days later.

This is what luck brings. When we were left in Athens, while they departed, we felt sorry for ourselves and thought we had bad luck but in terms of arriving in Turkey it ended up as our good luck, so you see, with luck you never know which is good and which is bad. Things are not what they seem.

The name of the camp where we were was Halep, I think, and upon arrival we were sprayed and showered in order to get sanitized. They were afraid that we had fleas and who knows what else, and maybe they were not wrong. There we met a lot of other Jews waiting to be sent to Israel by train, but we had rather limited contacts with the soldiers.

Soon after we arrived there was a Romanian family leaving for Israel by car and I was approached with the proposal to leave with this family. Despite the fact that I didn't know them, I decided to go.

I thought to myself: they are going by taxi, the others will be sent in a goods train, let me take this chance and we will see. So I left with them, and in no time I found myself in Haifa and then Tel Aviv. I cannot recall how long this journey lasted. All I remember is that we left early in the morning and they spoke among themselves in Romanian and I didn't understand a word. When we arrived in Haifa, Sochnut 22 took over and we were taken to Tel Aviv. I stayed about eight days under the wings of Sochnut, which was an organization providing assistance and help to the newcomers. A nephew of my grandmother Saporta was living in Tel Aviv. He had a loan library; his name was Albert Alcheh. Finally, after eight days I went to stay with Lina, a first cousin of mine. At the back of my mind I was hoping to find Aunt Rachelle and Elio.

After I had stayed at Lina's for a week Samuel Molho came with a proposal. This guy, Samuel Molho, was somehow a relative since one of my father's sisters was married to a Molho, from his family. The proposal was to move to his place where he had built rooms on the top floor and there were staying Paul, Rita, Totos, and Mimi Nahmias, who was Rita's sister, and Paul's father and mother. He said, 'Since your whole group of friends is living in my place come and stay here too, so that you will not burden Lina.' This is how I decided to move and stay at Samuel Molho's place.

There I stayed in the same room with Mrs. Noah and her husband and Mimi who was the sister of their bride. My bed was under another bed and it was pulled out when the time would come for me to sleep. Four people in a small room. It was not easy. Poor Mrs. Noah couldn't sleep at night but she would cry for the loss of their two children that disappeared with Nadir, Rene and Sylvia. She had a lot of difficulty accepting the loss.

All my friends were staying at the top floor, where Samuel had built rooms and a kitchen and a toilet - everything that was needed - and there were also Frida and Jacque Saltiel. However, for me, the fourth person in the bedroom, it was rather tight. It was hard to wash yourself or put on some basic clothing and go to the bathroom, etc.

Now, Tel Aviv had a Thessaloniki Club, 'Le Club des Saloniciens,' and they were trying to accommodate whomever they could. Mrs. Angel, who was a member of the club, said that she would gladly accept at her house a girl from Thessaloniki approximately at the age of her own daughter.

Although I never went to the club they came with this proposal to me. They told me that I would be much more comfortable there, and it would be more peaceful, and I don't know what else. I thought that even three left in this small bedroom, it still was too much. And since I had a chance to move to this new place although it was away from my friends and with people I did not know, I decided to go for it and went.

At Mrs. Angel's place I had a room to myself. There was this couch that would turn into a bed. Every night I would make my bed and undo it in the morning in order to turn it back into a couch. Mrs. Angel's daughter was Nora and she was a fine girl and we got along very well, the two of us.

As soon as I arrived in Tel Aviv my priority was to find a job. I handed in all kind of applications for a job. I wrote that I knew French, English, Spanish and Greek. I applied at the post office, stating also that I knew typing and stenography, I applied at the military camp, at the bank that all the Thessaloniki's Jews were going to, the Discount Bank, which belonged to Tida Saporta's cousin, as well as the Cyprus Bank. Suddenly, an invitation to work came from the military camp and I went to

work for them. It was the British military. I would wake up at five in the morning, get on a military lorry and go to the camp, which was rather far from the city. I don't even know in which direction we were going but once there I would type on a machine all day long. I would write whatever I was given but I cannot recall the subjects of the letters. During all this period I was wearing civilian clothing contrary to everybody else in the camp. I don't even remember at what time I would arrive back home from work. All I know is that it was extremely tiring.

I hadn't been working for a very long time for the military when a positive response came from the post office, and a little later from the bank. This is how I decided to quit the job at the military camp, since the long commuting in combination with the early waking up time and the long hours of work, was quite exhausting. I had a possibility to change all that and would have been stupid not to take it.

The post office had explained in their letter that they wanted me for some kind of censorship. I was supposed to read the letters of others and report whatever didn't look proper. I decided it was not a job for me and as soon as I received the bank's letter I went to the bank. That was the Cyprus Bank.

At the bank I was the secretary of the bank managers. We had two, one British manager and one Cypriot, and I had a small office to myself next to the managers while all the rest of the personnel were located in a big common room. The English manager would write the letters, I would type them and take them to him for signing. This, followed by the appropriated filing, was my job. The Cypriot manager would advise me on what to do and how to facilitate the British guy without pressuring him.

I had no exact time schedule since I would leave when I had finished with my daily job and put everything in order. It could be at three, or three thirty, or four, depending on the workload. When I finished I would not return to Mrs. Angel's for lunch but I went to a close-by Sephardic restaurant. The owner was Issua and there you could eat properly, with the others, the Ashkenazi.

At this restaurant I could eat alone. He would cook our way. He also made stuffed tomatoes since he, the owner, was from Thessaloniki and both the quantity and the quality of the food were highly satisfactory. There I would meet Charles Josef with his wife Nini and many other people like us.

Since I had no money and Paul had paid the partisans for me, I found a second job. After lunch at the restaurant I would go to an import-export agent, whose name I cannot remember, despite the present he gave me when I left. There I would take care of all his correspondence. He was telling me what he wanted and then I had to phrase it and write the letters properly. I was dealing with everything.

I would normally finish by eight in the evening and at that time I was so tired that I had no energy left for anything else, and this is the reason I never learned Hebrew. I studied for a week or so, at the beginning of my arrival, but had to drop it when I started working.

Then one day the bank manager called me and asked me about my second employment. He also asked me if I knew that I was not permitted to have a second job as I was involved with banking permissions. I had access to all the files, and whoever wanted information could contact me. I told the bank manager that despite the fact that I had no family, the money I was receiving was not

enough and I had no other alternative but to have a second job. Then he told me that, formally, he knew nothing about my second employment. He was so satisfied with the quality of my work that he was prepared to cover up for me with regards to my second employment, and later, when I got engaged to my future husband he was literally crying when I was leaving. Believe it or not he explained to me that it was the first time he felt things where in such good order, due to my presence.

During the period I lived in Israel the only group of people I had contact with was my old group of friends. Most of them went to work in factories, since they didn't know any foreign languages. Some went to the Discount Bank, as the owner was from Thessaloniki and he was hiring people originating from there. It is worth noting that Matoula Haim, who later became Elio's wife, was also there, going to school, but I don't know any details about her. We hardly knew each other then.

With the two jobs, my days were fully occupied and I could do nothing else. All this period I never went any place. I didn't go to the synagogue, not even once, and all the high holidays I would stay at Mrs. Angel's. This family, the husband being also a distant relative of my mother, was not very religious; they would play cards and I would stay with them and not go out of the house.

During all my life in Thessaloniki there were no 'traditional' Jews there. In Israel I first saw Jews with long beards, round hats and black robes filled with greasy spots and I said to myself: Now I can understand the expression 'dirty Jew.' Not even in photographs had we ever seen Jews dressed like that. Even the children were like that and this was my first impression. In Thessaloniki we had no conscious knowledge that we were different from the rest.

People in Israel gave me the impression of being aggressive and rude. We were used to be more attentive and we showed more respect to each other. We were also sweeter in our way of speaking and wouldn't say 'tipesh,' which means idiot. Very quickly we learned the expression 'tipesh pilit/pilita,' which means foolish, idiotic refugees. After that I found a job and stopped being in contact with them.

Except from being arrogant, people in Israel also didn't take care of the way they dressed. They would wear these shorts down to the knee level, which we had never seen before in Thessaloniki. Even the officers of the army were wearing these shorts. After some time even your eye gets used to it, and, admittedly, it is practical for a hot climate, but at first they looked very neglected to me.

Some people from Thessaloniki ended up wearing these 'not taken care of' clothes, but I never did. I had one dress which I wore and it was always clean and ironed, I was never badly dressed or neglected, never. Of course, it was summer there as I had left when winter started.

We didn't have any contact with Israelis, men or women. All the contacts we had were with people from Thessaloniki and particularly I, as I was working in the bank, with an office to myself, and had no contact with the other employees who were working in the common room. I would not go to the common room.

I certainly missed my group of friends, but each one of them was occupied with earning his or her daily bread by working in factories, etc. Of course, I had more advantageous conditions but it was due to my knowledge of English and French and of typing.

The liberation found me in Israel. Later I learned what had happened to my sisters. As I wasn't in Greece I don't know what the liberation was like here. I remember a big cry of joy: the war is over, the war is over! I don't remember any celebrations but when you are closed in, working all day, you don't always know what is happening.

## After the War

What changed immediately is that contact with Thessaloniki was established immediately. I learned that Uncle David and Aunt Mitsa were alive. Letters were the only form of communication, only letters. As they knew I was in Israel they could send me letters via Albert Altcheh and he would pass them on to me.

First, I made contact with the people who stayed in Greece, that is, Uncle Pepo and Uncle David. All the other members of my family had been moved from the concentration camps to Spain and then Israel. Actually, from Spain they were sent to North Africa, to Casablanca, and then to a camp in Israel. When they arrived I went to see them there.

When they came to Israel, Uncle Mentesh and Uncle Sabetai rented a small apartment to share and since it was rather small, there was no room for their mother, my grandmother, who was put in an old people's home.

During the war, Grandmother was with all the Spanish citizens and it was Rosa, the sister of Alice and Linda, who was a kind-hearted person, who took care of her, washing her clothes and everything else.

Life in the old people's home was not at all happy for Grandmother. As she was almost deaf, she would make noises when she was pulling the metal pots to pee, during the night, and other 'guests' were complaining. She was instructed to be more careful, but she couldn't hear.

Anyhow one day, they came to her and asked her if she wanted a haircut and as she didn't hear them or understood, she smiled and nodded and they came and cut her hair that she was wearing long, all during her adult life, tied in a low chignon. When Grandmother saw her face after her haircut she couldn't accept the outcome and she was crying and crying, and when I went to see her she told me, 'Look, look what has become of Mazaltov Saltiel, look!' And she was crying. What was there to say? The people, responsible for this hair disaster, said that she had been asked and agreed, and she said that she didn't understand. Grandmother died very, very sad.

All I had in my mind was returning to my people. I was starving for the warmth of my family and I knew that both Uncle David and Uncle Pepo were alive. Uncle David didn't get married and was living with his brother Pepo and his wife, Aunt Mitsa. All three of them thought of going to a small island and live there, hidden with their young baby daughter Rena. Unfortunately, the Germans caught them on the Island of Lesvos and put them in prison, but since Aunt Mitsa, who came from Vienna, knew the German language, she somehow managed to stay out of prison with her little daughter.

Aunt Mitsa made her living on the island by telling the future from reading coffee cups. She would learn what the news of the neighborhood were and as she knew the facts, she would say, for example, 'I can see here, in the marks of the leftovers of the coffee, that you have a relationship

with someone. Ah! This is serious. Be very careful.' Her clients would bring her as payment a chicken or some potatoes or other useful things that would help her survive, as they had no money and no other means of support.

This lasted until the liberation when they all returned to Athens and later on to Thessaloniki. During this period I was in Israel so I don't know the rest of the details. What I know is that she never again touched a cup of coffee.

They sent me letters though Albert Altcheh since they knew how to contact me. Even the Spanish embassy in Athens knew how to reach me; they sent my travel papers to Ida Arouesti, a friend of my sister Matilde. This Ida, before the war, had a cousin who committed suicide by jumping from a balcony and to honor her memory, her father had built a synagogue, which today is called Monastirioton, and it is the big synagogue of Thessaloniki.

This is how I learned that my sisters were fine and we started our correspondence. Of course, I kept on working during all that time. Despite my desire to return I knew that my sisters were experiencing a severe lack of funds with the respective results.

They were both staying in Athens at Ida Arouesti's and as they had one overcoat to share, one of them would obligatorily stay at home in order to allow the other to go out. This unique overcoat was also a present from Ida. They were also making shoes out of rope as they had absolutely no money. They used rope for the bottom part of their shoes and they bought a sack, which were normally filled with 50 kilos of sugar, and used it to make the upper part of the shoes. Those were very difficult times!

Later Eda found a job at the Greek-British Chamber of Commerce while Matilde was unemployed. They were both passing the poorest period of their life. Ida later got married and went to Milan in Italy.

Some of my relatives that had gone to Spain had already returned to Thessaloniki. Uncle Sinto, Rene's father, wrote me a fine, touching letter asking me to go to him: 'You will be like my own daughter,' he promised, but Aunt Sol, his wife, Rena's grandmother and my father's sister, didn't agree to have us. I have kept this letter where Aunt Sol says that she has four boys - Davi, Sumuel, Joseph and Marcel - and that she cannot take care of us, having also three daughters, Mathilde, Jeannette and Paullina.

Uncle Pepo and Uncle David said that we were welcome and we could go and live with them anytime we wanted.

At this exact time Solon Molho came back from the island of Skopelos, where he was hiding during the war, and went to Uncle David and explained to him that he loved me and that he wanted to marry me. Uncle David wrote to me in Israel and my response to the proposal was positive.

Solon didn't know where to find me so he said to himself: 'Let me go to Uncle David.' So he went to Uncle David and told him, 'I love Renée, what are we going to do about it?' And uncle David wrote me a letter and I said to myself, 'Let me weigh things, we are alone, we have no money - not that Solon had any, I already told you that we started from scratch - anyway I have to get married. This is a person that I know, I know his family. Why not marry him?'

I knew Solon from the time of the occupation. As I have already told you there was a period that Solon, Totos, Bob and all the group of friends were coming every evening to our place. Of course, I had memories and I remembered Solon and after I gave the positive response I began to get prepared to return to Thessaloniki

I knew Solon's parents from before the war. They were Mair and Sterina Molho. Mair was a bookseller, Sterina a housewife and their children, in addition to Solon, were Victoria and Yvonne. Both his sisters were married and had children before the war. Yvonne, the eldest, was married to Henry Michel and had a son, Daviko, and Victoria was married to Youda Leon and had a son, Niko, and a daughter, Nina.

The Molhos were not a family of Spanish origin, contrary to my family, and I wonder if I should not go and get a Spanish identification card even now.

The Molho family was living in a house opposite ours, so they knew us and Sterina, as we passed by with my sisters, was saying to her son Solon, 'This is a girl for you to take as a wife.'

Sterina Molho was easy going and good willed, while at the same time she was a realist. She also had brothers that had gone to Italy, but I know nothing more about them. Here at home we have a set of dishes with the initial E which belonged to Sterina as her maiden name was Errera, and she was the only member of her family that didn't go to live in Italy, being married at the time the decision was made.

Now, Solon Molho was very much loved as a boy. You see, he had an older brother, who he didn't meet, because he set himself on fire while playing with matches under his bed and died. Family legend has it that it was the day that the Orient-Express arrived in Thessaloniki. When Solon was born, all the parents' love was directed to him. Solon's sisters were considerably older than him. I believe that the brother that was lost to this fire was born between the two sisters.

Solon, as a young man, was rather athletic. He would go on excursions, climb the mountains, go fishing, etc. He was also a boy scout. This is the reason why, later, we sent all our children to the boy scouts, to summer camps, etc.

Solon was attending the Altcheh school, which was located opposite their house, and it was rather convenient as during the break he would return to his house. He wasn't particularly quiet, prudent or calm as a child.

In the neighborhood was the shop of Thomas, a bicycle shop, where you could either rent or repair your bicycle, and Solon was at his shop every time he would get a chance.

Many years later, after the war, a middle aged lady approached me once at a pastry shop. She asked me about Solon, and what the news was, and how he was, and she explained to me that she was Thomas's sister. I told her, 'He is fine, thank you ...' She told me that Salomonikos used to come to the shop to get a bicycle and ride away and Mrs. Sterina would also come after him and ask Thomas to take good care of Solon. He was very much loved, you see.

Solon's father, Mair Molho, was a rather severe man and right after the marriage of his daughter Victoria, he took Solon, who was 16 years old at the time, to the bookshop and started training him. His first job was to count sheets of paper, to receive the newspapers, etc. so that he could have

personal experience with all the bookshop tasks. The bookshop was the only one in Thessaloniki to carry international press and foreign, that is, English, French, German, etc. books.

Going back to the period of my positive response to getting married, all I knew then was that Solon belonged to a respected family that had a famous bookshop, that I had visited to buy books, that he was a close friend of Nadir, my cousin, that he was a member of our group of friends, that the was a Jew, that he seemed to be of a nice disposition and that was it. However, although we started from nothing, we fought and had a good life together.

At the time I met Solon, he was engaged to a girl called Dolly Modiano but apparently his mother didn't agree with it. Later Dolly got engaged to somebody else, as she realized that Solon didn't respond positively to her, that is, to Mardoche. She left with Mardoche and didn't go to the concentration camp since Mardoche had a lot of money. He wasn't very good- looking and didn't seem to be on the same level with Dolly, who was an intelligent and fine girl.

Solon, of course, had gone to the Greek army; actually he was in the army with Nadir and that's how they became friends. When the Germans arrived he was still serving in the army. I'm not sure where exactly he served, maybe Albania, or actually I think it was in Sidirokastro. From Sidirokastro he returned to Thessaloniki on foot. [Sidirokastro: A fort on the Greek- Bulgarian border. It was attacked by the Germans on 6th April 1941, and was taken three days later.]

He had to present the contents of the cash register he was managing in the army and they, Solon and other soldiers, walked to a port, took a boat that was chased by planes and then walked again in order to make it to Thessaloniki. The cash he was responsible for, was a serious source of anxiety for him, since it didn't belong to him but to the army, and when he managed to pass it to someone else, he left and arrived in Thessaloniki, as a civilian, not a soldier any more.

In the meantime the Germans had arrived in the city. As soon as they arrived, they confiscated the bookshop, threw everybody out without permitting them - owner and staff - to take even their personal belongings, not even their clothes and jackets, and they sent Mair Molho into exile. I don't know where exactly this exile was, maybe the island of Ios 23, but I know that shortly after, he was brought back and forced to sell the whole business to a German collaborator, a bookseller called Vosniadis, for the sum of three golden pounds. This is how the bookshop ownership 'changed.'

Solon stayed in Thessaloniki until the Germans decided to take measures against the Jews. Right after the gathering at Eleutherias Square in Thessaloniki, Solon left on a rowboat, saying, 'I am not staying here,' and went rowing to Evoia, and finally ended up in Athens, which was under Italian occupation. When those new instructions against the Jews were issued and all the Jews were put into the ghetto and later on, many left for the camps, our relationship suddenly ended.

However, in the meantime, from his return from the army until his departure for Athens, he was coming every evening to our place for a visit. We were staying at Brouffa Street with Aunt Rachelle, who had two boys and two girls. If you include us, there were five girls and the boys were, of course, rather happy to be in our company instead of going here and there. As our mother had recently died, they would come home and try to make us laugh. This is how I first met Solon and his behavior was very proper.

Uncle Pepo had invited me to return and I could stay at his place. Solon had returned and subconsciously he had me as his wife in his head, probably because of his mother telling him when she first saw me, 'This little girl is for you.' So when he came back from the island he went to Uncle David and told him that he wanted me as his wife and he wanted to settle down. Uncle David wrote to me, as I told you, and I evaluated the proposal, and I decided that I also wanted to settle down with him since I knew him and his family, and I didn't want to look elsewhere.

I knew very well, at that period, that Totos loved me. So how could I say yes to Solon had I not secretly loved him too? So when I said yes, I got prepared and took the return trip. It is worth noting that during that period in Israel a cousin of mine, Leon, was also after me and he would have liked very much to be engaged to me, let alone Toto. Solon was my choice. This Leon was a cousin of my mother, I don't remember how he was related, and his mother was English, and he would come and we would go out, but that was it.

During all this period we didn't go dancing even once. We would go to the coffee shop, have a coffee, sing a song, etc. We would find life, and the whole situation in Israel, rather monotonous. We were used to live different rhythms. We would go to the coffee shops in the evening and we wanted to sing, and be merry, and we sang the Greek songs that we knew in the streets. I cannot recall the exact songs we were singing, but we were singing with a lot of nostalgia for Greece and in this atmosphere I said to myself, 'I will go back.' I didn't ask the advice of anyone since I really knew what I wanted and I sent the positive response to uncle David and said that I would try to return.

What made me happy with the liberation was that letters started arriving, and I have kept these letters. Letters from my sisters and letters to my sisters, letters from Uncle Pepo and, of course, Solon's letters. I was happy. I would have my own family and not stay in a foreign country or in a foreign house. My days were very long as I would go out at eight in the morning and at best return at eight at night, but they were full of anticipation and joy.

So I arranged all the necessary papers and I returned with Charles Joseph and his first wife, Nini, who was the daughter of a first cousin of my father. All members of the Saltiel family, and even his second wife, Rosa, was also a Saltiel.

We first arrived in Piraeus and from there went to Thessaloniki. I cannot recall where I first saw my sisters after the war. Was it in Athens? Was it here? I do not remember. I stayed at Aunt Mitsa's place as there was nowhere else to go.

Eda was working at the Greek-British Chamber of Commerce in Athens. Matilde was also there but not working, and they were staying at Idas's. I cannot bring to my mind our first meeting after the war.

When I arrived in Thessaloniki, Victoria came to me as Solon was sick in bed. He participated in a yachting tournament and as he was shouting very much he had had a hernia and he was taken to the hospital, he was operated on and exactly when I arrived he was in bed recovering. Victoria was Solon's sister, married to Youda Leon with two children; Niko and Nina. I knew them from the period before the war but we did not have any relationship.

As for the Molho family, they were all deported to Germany: Solon's father and mother, Yvonne, his sister, and her husband and child. The same goes for all the rest of his relatives. The only one left was Victoria and her family.

The way they were saved is that one day they were at a drugstore and at this drugstore happened to be Doctor Kallinikides, and he was commenting about the dreadful things that were happening to the Jews. He also was saying that he would be willing to save a family of Jews. When they heard that statement, although they didn't know him, they approached him. Mrs. Kallinikides went to their place to take the children, to his own house. Later he managed to get in touch with the people who were occupied with transporting illegally the Jews to Athens, under the very nose of the Germans.

This way, very quietly, Mr. Kallinikieds saved first the children and then arranged for someone to pick up the adults, from another place, and arranged all the details for their safe journey to Athens. They left together with the youngsters, Niko and Nina who were five and two years old, respectively. They were very lucky and Mrs. Kallinikides remained a friend of the family forever.

When this happened, Solon was already in Athens. In Athens, when they found each other and in order to survive, they were manufacturing soaps: Solon assisting Victoria's husband, Youda, who had had a soap manufacturing factory in Thessaloniki and knew all about it. Selling them from house to house they were making a living. Later the Germans occupied Athens, so they were forced to go and hide themselves elsewhere.

They went to Glossa Skopelou. Giorgos Mitziliotis, the mayor of the village was one of the suppliers of Uncle Youda's factory, providing him with olive oil, which is a raw material for soap. All the Leon family, the grandfather and grandmother, Maurice, Jackos, Youda and his family and Victoria's brother, that is, Solon, etc. 14 persons were taken by him to Glossa. During the whole period of the occupation and until the liberation of Thessaloniki they all stayed there.

Giorgos took an immense risk, not only for himself and his family, but also for the whole village since he was the mayor and therefore the one in charge. The ones that could help did so. They were going out with Giorgos, cutting trees, assembling wood, looking after the animals, etc. They even had a mule. Once the mule refused to move and after various efforts that had angered Giorgos very, very much, in his desperation, he put his shoulders under the mule's belly and lifted her up and threw her over. The mule fell, got up and started walking back to the village.

The first period in Skopelos was a period with no Germans but when they arrived, the family was forced to move from place to place, so that the Germans would not notice them. What a life full of anxiety!

During that period, Solon, was also going to the local shipyard assisting in whichever job he could as he was young, full of strength and life. He also worked with the local ironsmith and on his false ID, his job is that of an ironsmith.

They also listened to a hidden radio so that they knew what was going on and what was happening in an effort to be in front of unfortunate happenings. When the war was over, they all came back to Thessaloniki.

Giorgos Mitziliotis and his brother Stephanis are on the list of the Righteous Among the Nations.

As soon as he arrived in Thessaloniki he went to the bookshop and a few days later he was given back the shop and the first floor was taken by the British Intelligence Service, who used it as a 'lecture and training salon.' I don't know from whom he took back the shop as I was not here during that period, but I know that one or two days later he was in his shop. The books, of course, were all taken by Vosniades, but the stationary, out-dated of course, was there. Later they brought the books that had not been sold by Vosniades, back to the shop.

Every day the top floor was full of people because the British had a big map and they were noting on the map the movement of the armies and how the Germans were retreating, etc. until the end of the war. The British were located in the shop until every spot was liberated. Then they opened the British Council, where amongst other things they had a library and they were teaching the English language. Exactly as it is today.

As the bookshop opened, books started coming from abroad and Greek books too, and I have the impression that we are certainly the oldest bookshop in Thessaloniki if not in the whole of Greece - older than Elefteroudaquis.

Solon was staying with his sister Victoria and her husband Youda at Karolou Deal Street while I stayed at Aunt Mitza's house. What I recall from our first meeting is that we were both very emotional. He was moved, as I was too, and we were crying and everything. We were greatly moved sentimentally. We were crying and we were kissing. What can I say? It is the desire to share what overcomes you and you do not calculate what you do. You do not think, let me kiss him now; you just do it as it comes with the moment. And it is quite natural and normal to kiss, to cry and laugh afterwards. First, the cries and certainly laughter follows.

When I returned to Thessaloniki the city was free. It was 1944 or 1945 and I had no problems whatsoever.

I cannot recall how long after this reunion we got married. It was Mrs. Margaritis, the sister of my aunt Mitsa, who was a musician who gave me my wedding dress, which was one of the dresses she was wearing to go to concerts.

The marriage took place at the Monastirioton Synagogue on 17th March 1946. I remember that all the marriage preparations were taken care of by Aunt Mitsa and Uncle Pepo and everything was very fine. And we were very happy. After the marriage, we all went to Aunt Mitsa's house. I don't remember who it was that placed his hand on top of the fireplace with such enthusiasm that the fireplace fell apart.

It is that the same place where we are living today, that was Solon's parents' house. It is here that Solon was born and where he came after he left Victoria's place. In this house, his parents' house, he found other people living: refugees, and, of course, they didn't want to move out. This happened with all the Jewish houses that were left 'empty' during the war. People moved in and after the war it was difficult to force them out. Anyhow, I don't know how Solon got the house back. I think it was with the help of Thomas, the bicycle man, but when we got married it was already available to us. I don't remember if there was any furniture left. All I know is that Solon took good care of it, and even built a fireplace for my sake. He wanted to make me happy.

Our honeymoon was a trip to Athens by boat. We went to Kifissia, a suburb of Athens, and stayed a few days there at a hotel and then came back to Thessaloniki. Upon that we started working and working and doing nothing else but work.

So we were married. He was a bookseller and I tried to make curtains out of an anti-mosquito cloth which I also dyed in a happy color, and hung them on the windows as they were facing the street, and it was the only way to protect our privacy, not allow to see from the outside what was happening inside. All our belongings, things, clothes, etc. were stolen by the man that was supposed to take care of them and it was very difficult for us to manage.

In the meantime, Eda was staying in Athens, working at the Greek-British Chamber of Commerce and Matilde, I think, stayed at Aunt Mitza's. Matilde married David Dzivre. Of course, it was match-making. Some people who knew them proposed and that's how they approached each other. They had two children, Nico and Yofi [Joseph]. Nico has already died.

Eda had first been engaged to Albertico Abravanel, but they didn't agree as he was a dark character and they separated. In the meantime, Raf loved her secretly, Rafael Saporta was Tida's brother and was one of our closest friends. All their family had been deported with the Spanish Jews, and after the war he never came back to Greece but lived in Paris, France. When Tida went to visit him she arranged for their engagement. Later they got married but I didn't manage to go to their wedding. They had a daughter named Sylvie.

In general, I would say that my sisters were never informed in detail of how I lived in Israel, neither did I get details about their life in the Haidari prison. All I know is that, from time to time, they would gather all of the prisoners in the yard and a German would select and take some individuals out of the line and send them to the firing squad.

As my sisters were Spanish subjects they were protected from the firing squad and the Spanish ambassador, Mr. De Romero, had involved himself with their survival. Every week he was sending a package with food to my sisters. It was Mrs. Lembessi, the lady who also helped me with my father, who was taking the packages to them.

If I go through my papers I'm sure I will find something about him. There are also pictures that were saved, and also the letters I wrote to my sisters, and other letters. I don't know how they happen to be in my house. I was the first one to get married and to have a house of my own, so I suppose, they gave them to me to guard and never claimed them back. Sometimes I open these letters and read them and see them from new prisms but anyhow ...

Going back, as a newly-wed I was very unhappy that I was staying in a house from where I couldn't see the sea and I had neighbors living that close. At first I had the impression that I was in a prison, with no space in front, as all my life I had grown up in houses overlooking and next to the sea.

Then Solon and I decided that it was about time to have children and so I got pregnant. I was very, very happy. Having a child in the family! It had been a number of years since we had seen children and when I first gave birth it was a boy! What a happy moment.

Samiko and his wife Clarice were in love with him; Samiko remembers Mair on his pot and gets emotional! Samiko Saltiel was a very close friend of Solon. He was living in the Vardari area, close to Nadir, and it is through Nadir that Solon met him and started hanging out with him until they

became very close. The two couples, we were meeting quite frequently. We were close. Samiko and Clarice at some point decided to live in Switzerland and the friendship faded.

This first child was my first joy. The first joy for a long time and when we organized the brit milah, what a beauty he was, and how many people came! The Athens mohel came for it and I remember the brit, and the joy, and the majesty of it, and the atmosphere of joy, and the sweets, and the invitations, the people, and the live music, the Tchalgin.

In Thessaloniki before the war and for a short period after it, the Jewish musicians that would be invited in marriages, engagements and other fiestas, were called Tchalgin. And they played and played and played. I don't know the exact musical instruments they were using but they were sitting and playing and playing. I don't think that people danced at the brit milah.

When the second boy was born I was rather disappointed as I wanted it to be a girl. And once again the brit and the fiesta and everything; but I wanted a girl. God listened to me and, 'if not the second it will be the next child, so make another,' and it worked. The third child was a girl.

I never had a miscarriage but when I got pregnant for the fourth time I didn't want it since it would have been a lot more weight on my shoulders and the times were difficult so I forced a stop of the pregnancy. I think that, at the end of the day, this was a big mistake. After this fourth stopped pregnancy I was lucky and I never had problems with my health.

I started working at the bookshop when I decided that I wanted to be there.

All my children went to a good school. When they were at school, at home we had two ladies with the same name, Olga, who were taking care of the house and the children. 'Olga mama,' the older Olga, had been a maid of my mother- in-law for many years, well before the war, before they were deported. She was a couple of years older than Solon and this was the only family she remembered. When Victoria returned from the island, 'Olga mama' came back to work at her house, and when Solon and I had children she came to live with us. She spoke Spanish like all the rest of the family.

The other Olga was taking care of the house and also helping with the children, while 'Olga mama' knew how to cook exactly like my mother-in-law, as she had been with the family for many years and, of course, always kept an eye on the young ones.

I worked very intensively. First, I started by dealing with current problems, to order the requested subscriptions of the foreign magazines for the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, for the departments of Medicine, Architecture, Mechanics, etc. Then I started studying the French bibliography and little by little I was managing the whole French department.

Right after the war my husband was at the bookshop day and night. In order to start again he went to the Bank of Greece and asked for a loan. Let's say he asked for 150,000 drachmae. The bank manager sent him to the cashier and he gave him 300,000 drachmae, double of what he had asked for. With this money Solon managed to order the books for the first school term. We were in competition with another bookseller, and we would bring the first books by plane in order to be the first to have them.

Retail book sellers would be coming to the shop even at midnight, so that they would have the new books the next morning, in their shop. And I had the feeling that we never stopped working.

Of course, as I told you, we started with no capital. Not only that, but when the bookshop was closed by the Germans, there were open balances with foreign suppliers. When we re-opened after the war, in order to re-open our accounts with our main furnishers, despite the fact that obviously we were not responsible, we promised to pay whatever we owed them from before the war. We owed them nothing but we paid all the same.

This way, we paid Hachette, Oxford and the others, the French, the English, even the Germans, we paid. I don't remember the exact details of those accounts but what I know for certain is that we paid even the last penny of all our foreign debts. Not all of them together but slowly we managed to reduce and finally pay off all our accounts. We never used other peoples' money for ourselves!

One day there was an article in the foreign newspapers about King Paul. [Paul, King of the Hellenes (1901-1964): King of Greece from 1947 to 1964.] I don't know exactly what the article was about, as there was censorship during that period, but they came and wanted to arrest Solon who, of course, was not responsible since the newspapers had already been given permission by the censorship to circulate.

Solon, probably out of his anxiety, had a big boil on his top lip, right below his nose and it was very dangerous due to the amount of puss and it became a serious threat to his health. He saw many physicians and it took quite some time for him to be treated and recover, as the boil had to be neutralized.

At the bookshop we had all the newspapers and we were reading them. I cannot say that I was reading the Greek press, since it was much easier for me to read the French or the English papers.

The years went by slowly and we approached the 100th anniversary of the bookshop in 1988, its official date of creation being in 1888, and we decide to celebrate it. We organized a very successful reception and the French state decorated Solon and me with the title of 'Chevalier des Lettres et des Arts' and this is not an easy recognition to be given by the French.

They decorated us for services offered to the French Nation. If you work 100 years, and you are in contact with French publishers, it is expected that they may honor you, not only because they wish it but because you have earned it yourself, and it is due to your own merit. It is not an easy and simple thing.

For the celebration of the 100 years we printed a small commemorative booklet with the bookshop history and we also gave a reception. Whatever I do not remember is included in this booklet, and there was also a book where professors of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and clients and friends were writing their thoughts and their impressions about us.

Anyhow, time keeps on passing and since then we have received a number of 'slaps in the face.' I couldn't say that I faced any sort of anti-Semitism. Even the first book orders of the Aristotle University were given to us. It was not at the very beginning of the bookshop after the war, but the professors of the university were coming to the shop and we had very good relationships with them, particularly the good and active ones, not the ones who were there only for the title.

I never faced any problems because I was a Jew, no, no. We had a lot of acquaintances and friends who were Christians and you can go through the pictures of Mair's marriage to see many of them. From my early childhood, I was chic, elegant, and this is no joke. Whatever I needed, I wanted it to be top quality. I preferred to have one piece of good quality as opposed to two or three inferior ones. I went to the top couturiers, dressmakers of Thessaloniki and even Mrs. Kiouka, the top one, when she gave an interview a few years ago, she made reference to me being a good and proper client of hers.

Every summer, when my children were young, we were going for vacation to Agia Triada, a small village on the sea shore near Thessaloniki, as my husband could come and go every day. In the morning he would depart with the car of Jack Saltiel, or directly by boat, which would leave him in the wharf next to the market and the bookshop. They would return in the evening.

Jack and Frida Saltiel lived in Thessaloniki for a number of years after the war and then left for Athens and later Canada. They had three boys, Riro, Tiko and a third one, no girls. They went to live in Canada where they are now. It never occurred to us to leave Greece and go to live elsewhere.

We were not going to the synagogue very frequently. Of course for the memorial service of my father, and my mother, and quite frequently on Fridays, I would go to light a candle and ask God to take care of us and not to forget us.

All the Jewish high holidays we celebrated at home, like Rosh Hashanah, Pesach, Sukkot etc. We certainly didn't make our own sukkah during Sukkot. After the war nobody was doing it, so we were all going to the sukkah that was set up at the community and we were going only on one day, not the eight days that Sukkot lasts. I cannot recall until which age I was taking my children there.

At the door you can see a mezuzah which for me symbolizes a prayer, a prayer of protection by God. This is what it represents for me. I don't stick to the mezuzah as an object, since when I want to pray, I pray wherever and whenever I wish. I don't consider the existence of the mezuzah as a push towards praying. It is in order for God to protect this house in which I live.

I don't know if I have taught Judaism to my children. I believe in God but I don't consider myself a fanatic stuck to the religious rules. As for my children I don't know what they do where religion is concerned.

Spanish was the language we were using with my husband. With my children we were speaking in Greek and sometimes I would use Spanish so that their ears could get used to its sound.

After the war, we kept contact with all the relatives that were alive. All of my father's family was alive as they were Spanish subjects, except for Uncle Leon who was deported with his family and never came back. He was deported with his neighborhood. They deported him with the rest of the non- Spanish Jews. He was married to Nini Nahmias and they had two children, Riki, or Rikoula, who was named after my grandmother, and Victoria, innocent Victoritsa, who was four or five years old.

In particular, we met Uncle Sinto who was here with his family, Uncle Avram, Uncle Mentesh and Uncle Sabetai. All of them have now passed away. Uncle Mentesh and Uncle Sabetai, as Spanish subjects, were taken to Israel during the war. After the liberation they came back here, stayed a few years and later returned to Israel again, where they lived and died. Uncle Avram also went to

Israel, only Sinto stayed here. Two of his children are still alive, Rene Arditi and Linda Erera.

How do I think my life would have evolved if there had been no war? It would have depended, I guess, let's say on the person I would have married. If we assume that he would have been as good as the one I actually married, it would have made no difference, provided that I could manage to love him.

It happened in our society that people, with no education, had managed to have a lot of money, but had no manners. You have to understand that our family from both my father's and my mother's side were 'very refined socially.' This is the reason that I say it all depends on the husband you get. Love marriages were very rare. I don't know any.

The city, on the external side, would look the same, but with no presence of the people we knew. All the neighborhoods in which Jews were living were now empty of Jews, their houses full of Christians. Whole streets like Misrahi, today Fleming Street, where we are now staying, were occupied only by Jews with the exception of one laborer called Filipou, who would come to the houses for small jobs. His son later became an architect and good friend of Jews.

However, the fact is that now, in this street, we are the only Jewish family while in the past there was not one Christian family. This is not only in this street but in many neighborhoods like '151' 24, 'Vardaris' 25, etc., but I wasn't very familiar with these areas. The true outcome was that we had lost all our contacts and we were isolated.

The Christians were very, very neutral toward us. When they would see you in the street they would look at you as if to say, 'Ah, so you survived,' a little surprised, but an approach that was neither a friend's nor an enemy's reaction.

Discussions took place based on certain circumstances, particularly when we were meeting Maurice Leon, Jako Leon, the grandmother and all of the people that were hidden on the island with Solon. We had a lot of contact with them, despite the fact that they were relatives among themselves, their life in common on the island had strengthened their ties, and it was us and them and them and us.

Somehow Victoria and Solon knew about their parents - that they would never return. They would know it by what the people that came back; by what the survivors of the concentrations camps, were saying and they were not saying much.

I never had an opportunity to talk with people who returned. We were not discussing the subject, not even with the Capon family that retuned, Hasday Capon, who was a close friend of ours and we were going out together often, never spoke. We didn't talk about it because they refused to touch the subject. Even Marcel, Marcel Nadgari who, as you know, wrote whatever he could, and put it in a bottle which he buried, and it was found years later, and this is how they know what happened to him. Even him, he never talked about his experience in the concentration camps at that time.

All the people who came back, refused to talk about their experiences, as they didn't want to remember it. Also, they were confronted at first with people's disbelief and that didn't help at all. It was only later, after fifty or sixty years, that they decided to talk.

Since their experiences contained extreme acts, difficult for the human brain to grasp, in terms of evil, and the people who would listen couldn't believe that those things had really happened, it was only at the end of the survivors' lives and under the fear of the approaching end that they decided to write and talk about their experiences so that people would know. Some of them fifty years later.

It has never happened. Discussions were not welcome and Hasday wouldn't talk. How can I explain, the Jewish society that was left were all Spanish and Italians. Even some Italians had disappeared at the end, as had happened to the Fernandez family that was completely wiped out.

We never discussed the subject with Solon either. It was silently decided that as they had no news, they would never return. Neither his parents nor Yvonne, the other sister, who had been deported with her son and husband and never returned. They never really learned it officially. What did you expect? For them to send you the death certificate?

Still, it is good that some talked. I was listening at Simone Veil 26, who was explaining why she started talking, and about the implications they were making, as if they had gone on a pleasure trip. And she said to herself, at the end, they are going to give them medals! Let me sit down and write things as they are.

I never discussed these subjects with my children because they never had the patience to sit down and listen. I am very sorry to say it but had you not been asking, you would not know how I grew up, what I have been through and how and how my life has been.

I didn't have much contact with the Jewish community, only with the children's camp when the kids were young. I cannot say that I have any particular contact with the Jewish community even now but I was always correct concerning my obligations. I just didn't have close contact with anyone. Of course, I knew all of them, I respect them and they respect me, but I have no closer contacts.

It has been quite some time since I have sent an application to the Claims Conference, which sent me a positive reply, but for the time being I have not seen a practical outcome.

Normally, I go to the cemetery in Thessaloniki, where the great majority of my relatives are buried. My father was buried in Athens. His dead body was taken care of by the Spanish embassy and I left as soon as possible and a couple of hours later the Germans were there, looking for me, but I was gone. When I left that house, I stayed with Mrs. Lembess and from there after many adventures went to Israel. I didn't know where my father was buried; it was only when I came back from Israel that I learned that he was buried in the Jewish section of the 1st cemetery of Athens, which is a Christian cemetery with this small Jewish section. Of course I have visited my father's grave and prayed and paid my respects.

In the cemetery I start with the grave of my mother who is buried with my grandfather, their names are Stella Saltiel and Samuel Saltiel. Then I go to the graves of Uncle David Abravanel, who died first, and then to Uncle Pepo Abravanel, then to Aunt Mitsa Abravanel. The next grave I go to is my husband Solon Molho's.

Then I go to the grave of Jeannette Bensousan, the mother of Rena Molho, my daughter-in-law, who is married to my son Mair. Next is Renée Avram, the second wife of Joseph Avram, a friend who had been married in his first marriage to my best friend, Tida Saporta, who later became sister-in-law to

my sister, who married her brother Rafael. After that, I go to Mme. Gentille Saporta who is Tida's mother and her grave is next to my mother's.

Next I go to Maurice Haim. He was an employee we had at the shop who was killed by the 'rebels' when he was drafted into the army during the civil war 27. I cannot remember any other Jews taking part in the civil war; after all it's sixty years back and I simply can't recall.

Then I go to the monument for the ones lost in the concentration camps and say a prayer. Then there is a series of rabbis, and I also say another prayer over their graves. Oh, I forgot, I also go to the graves of Uncle Sinto and Aunt Bella Saltiel, the brother of my father and his wife.

Of course, we recite the Kaddish at the memorial anniversary of my father's and mother's death. First, I refer to them and then I have written down all the names of the men and women that I feel should be remembered.

A few years ago I would go to the synagogue for those anniversaries, but now I call a rabbi to recite it at home. His name is Daviko Saltiel. Naturally, we make a separate memorial for each one of them and I take the opportunity to refer to all the names of the dead people I would like to remember.

My son, Yofi, continued the bookshop and my son Mair opened a stationary shop and my daughter worked sometimes at the bookshop and sometimes at the stationary, nothing steady.

Yofi married Yolanda Papathanasopoulou, who was Christian and became a Jew. She studied the Jewish religion and when we went to Yugoslavia for the marriage, the rabbi passed her through a series of examinations on religious issues, converted her and then they got married. I cannot say I was glad, as I would have preferred an outright Jew, but I find that, even now that they are divorced, she has done a very good job with her children, who are growing up very properly.

Her son had a nice bar mitzvah and her daughter who is called Renee after me, had her bat mitzvah, all under her supervision. I could say that somehow they are following the Jewish religion, as they went to the Jewish school, they went to the synagogue every Friday, then to the Jewish club, and they kept the traditions with their mother, etc. Anyhow we don't know what the future will bring.

I have six grand children. I have three children and each one has two children, a boy and a girl. My eldest son Mair married Rena Bensousan and their children are Solon and Milena. My second son married Yolanda Papathanosopoulou and their children are Sami and Renee. My daughter Nina married Maurice Carasso and her children are Naomi and Dov, and now she is divorced. They all are Jews but not fanatics with regards to religion.

My favorite grandchild is Milena who shows me more love than the others. I do not see her very frequently but this is not easy since she lives in Athens, but when she comes to Thessaloniki she will always drop by and see me, always.

I have many wishes, but all of them now depend on the wishes of others, to assist me with transports, etc. As long as my husband was alive they would all come to our place during the celebrations and we would sit at the table, eat, play cards, sing, laugh and everything was fine.

Today things are different. My daughter Nina is trying to gather us, all together, at her place but it is not the old atmosphere. That is normal when the head of the family is missing. Anyhow, thanks to Nina we all get together.

I cannot say that I cook any more. Since Nina took over, there is no real reason for me to cook. Of course, when I am asked to do something and help, I will do whatever is necessary, for example make the sweet for Rosh Hashanah, the sweet called 'doulce de manzana.' I do it myself and we should not put any lemon, only sugar, so that everything will be sweet.

I thank God that he gave me a good husband who loved me and helped me. I have three children whose health and well-being I wish for with all my heart, and I pray to God to take me sweetly. This is my prayer.

## Glossary

**1 Ladino**
Also known as Judeo-Spanish, it is the spoken and written Hispanic language of Jews of Spanish and Portuguese origin. Ladino did not become a specifically Jewish language until after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 (and Portugal in 1495) - it was merely the language of their province. It is also known as Judezmo, Dzhudezmo, or Spaniolit. When the Jews were expelled from Spain and Portugal they were cut off from the further development of the language, but they continued to speak it in the communities and countries to which they emigrated. Ladino therefore reflects the grammar and vocabulary of 15th-century Spanish. In Amsterdam, England and Italy, those Jews who continued to speak 'Ladino' were in constant contact with Spain and therefore they basically continued to speak the Castilian Spanish of the time. Ladino was nowhere near as diverse as the various forms of Yiddish, but there were still two different dialects, which corresponded to the different origins of the speakers: 'Oriental' Ladino was spoken in Turkey and Rhodes and reflected Castilian Spanish, whereas 'Western' Ladino was spoken in Greece, Macedonia, Bosnia, Serbia and Romania, and preserved the characteristics of northern Spanish and Portuguese. The vocabulary of Ladino includes hundreds of archaic Spanish words, and also includes many words from different languages: mainly from Hebrew, Arabic, Turkish, Greek, French, and to a lesser extent from Italian. In the Ladino spoken in Israel, several words have been borrowed from Yiddish. For most of its lifetime, Ladino was written in the Hebrew alphabet, in Rashi script, or in Solitreo. It was only in the late 19th century that Ladino was ever written using the Latin alphabet. At various times Ladino has been spoken in North Africa, Egypt, Greece, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, France, Israel, and, to a lesser extent, in the United States and Latin America.

**2 The Fire of Thessaloniki**
In the night of 18th August 1917, an enormous fire, fed by the famous Vardar wind, destroyed the city centre where most of the Jews lived. It was a region of 227 hectares, where 15,000 families lived, 10,000 of them were Jewish families which were deprived of their homes. The Jews were hit the hardest, since more than two thirds of the property destroyed by the fire was Jewish and only a tenth of that immense fortune was insured. Nearly all the schools, 32 synagogues, 50 oratories, all the cultural centers, libraries, clubs, etc. were annihilated. Despite of the aid of a sum of 40,000

golden pounds collected from all over the world, the community never recovered from that disaster. The Jewish face of the city that had been there for more than five centuries was wiped out in 36 hours. 25,000, out of 53,000 of the stricken Jews that belonged mostly to the lower and middle class, were forced to live in the working-class districts that were hastily built in a rudimentary fashion. (Source: Rena Molho, 'Jewish Working-Class Neighborhoods established in Salonica Following the 1890 and the 1917 Fires,' in Rena Molho, 'Salonica and Istanbul: Social, Political and Cultural Aspects of Jewish Life,' The Isis Press, Istanbul, 2005, pp.107-126.)

**3 Eleutherias Square**

On 11th July 1942, following the order of the German Authority published by the local press, 6000-10.000 (depending on different estimations) male Jews aged from 18-45 were gathered in Eleutherias Square, in the commercial center of Thessaloniki. The aim was to enlist/mobilize them to forced labor works. Under the hot sun the armed soldiers forced them to remain standing for hours and imposed on them humiliating gymnastic exercises. The Wehrmacht army staff was taking photographs of the scene, while the Greek citizens were watching from their balconies. [Source: Marc Mazower, 'Inside Hitler's Greece' (Yale 1993)]

**4 L' Indépendant**

Jewish daily evening newspaper published in French, one of the most important and long lived newspapers published between 1909- 1941, when it was closed down by the Germans in April 1941. It did not endorse any political views and defended vehemently the rights of the Jews. [Source: Repf. Frezis: O evraikos typos stin Ellada, in Greek Volos, 1999 pp. 107-108].

**5 Le Progrés**

One of the 7 French-Jewish newspapers published in Salonica up until 1941.

**6 Andari or anderi**

Dark long outfit with sleeves, open in the front, usually worn by men.

**7 Mission Laique Francaise**

French Mission School, founded in 1905 in Salonica. Many Jews studied there in the interwar period.

**8 Burmoelos (or burmolikos, burlikus)**

A sweetmeat made from matzah, typical for Pesach. First, the matzah is put into water, then squashed and mixed with eggs. Balls are made from the mixture, they are fried and the result is something like donuts.

**9 Monastir Synagogue (Monastirioton in Greek)**

Founded in 1923, inaugurated in 1927 by the Aruesti family who during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), along with other Jewish families of Monastir (today Bitola), sought shelter in the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki and settled in the city. This synagogue survived the destructions during

World War II because it was used as the headquarters of the Red Cross.

**10 American College (or Anatolia College)**
School founded by American missionaries in Merzifon of Asia Minor, in 1886. In 1924, after the invitation of Eleutherios Venizelos, it was transfered to Thessaloniki. During the interwar period it had many Jewish students.

**11 Law of 1932**
By which Papanastasiou, Minister of Education, forbid the teaching of foreign languages at elementary school. Thus all the Jewish children who until then went to the French-Jewish schools of the Alliance had to go to a Greek school. This created a lot of problems since most of the Alliance schools had to merge with the Communal schools and poor Jewish pupils did no longer learn a foreign language.

**12 Campbell Fire (Pogrom on 29th June 1931)**
Responsible for the arson of the poor neighborhood Campbell was the Ethniki Enosis Ellas - National Union Greece, short: EEE also known as the 3E or the 'Iron Helmets.' This organization was the backbone of fascism in Greece in the period between the two World Wars. It was established in Thessaloniki in 1927. The most important element of the 3E political voice was anti-Semitism, an expression mostly of the Christian traders of the city in order to displace the Jewish competitors. President of the organization was a merchant, Mr. G. Cormides, there was also a secretary, a banker, D. Haritopoulos, and chief spokesman Nikos Fardis, editor-in-chief of the newspaper Makedonia. The occasion for the outbreak of anti-Semitism in Thessaloniki was the inauguration of the new Maccabi Hall in June 1931. In a principal article signed by Nikos Fardis, from Saturday, 20th June 1931, it was said that Maccabi of Thessaloniki had placed itself in favor of an Autonomous Greek Macedonia. The journalist "revealed" the conspiracy of Jews, Bulgarians, Communists and Catholics against Macedonia. Two days later, the Ministry of the Interior confirmed the newspaper's allegations despite the strict denial of the Maccabi representatives. All the anti-Semitic and fascist organizations were aroused. This marked the beginning of the riots that resulted in the pogrom of Campbell. Elefterios Venizelos was again involved after the 1917 fire, speaking at the parliament as Prime Minister, and talked with emphasis about the law-abiding stance of the Jewish population, but simultaneously permitted the prosecution of Maccabi for treason against the state. Let alone the fact that the newspaper Makedonia with the inflaming anti-Semitic publications was clearly pro-Venizelian. At the trial, held in Veroia ten months later, Fardis and the leaders of EEE were found not guilty while three refugees were found guilty, but with mitigating circumstances and therefore were freed on the spot. It is worth noting that at the 1933 general election, the Jews of Thessaloniki, in one block voted against Venizelos. [Source: Bernard Pierron, 'Juifs et chrétiens de la Grèce moderne,' Harmattan, Paris 1996, pp. 179-198]

**13 Greek-Albanian War/Greek-Italian War (1940-1941)**
Greece was drawn into WWII when Italian troops crossed the borders of Albania and violated Greek territory on 28th October 1940. The Italian attack of Greece seemed obvious, despite the stated disagreement of Hitler and the efforts of Ioannis Metaxas, who was trying to trying to keep the

country in a neutral stance. Following a series of warning signs, culminating in the sinking of Battleship 'Elli' on 15th August 1940, by Italian torpedoes, and all of these failing to provoke the Greek government to react, the Italian Ultimatum was delivered on 28th October 1940, and it demanded the free passage of the Italian army through Greek soil, as well as sole control of a series of strategic points of the country. The rejection of the ultimatum by Metaxas was in line with the public opinion in Greece and led to the immediate declaration of war by Italy against Greece. This war took place mostly in the mountains of Hepeirous. In the Greek-Albanian War approximately 12.500 Greek Jews took part and 513 Greek Jews died fighting. The Greek counter-offensive pushed the Italians deep into Albania and the Greek army maintained the initiative throughout the winter capturing the southern Albanian towns of Corce, Aghioi Saranda, and Girocaster. [Source: Thanos Veremis, Mark Dragoumis, 'Historical Dictionary of Greece' (London 1995)]

**14 Vembo, Sofia**

(1910-1978): She was called "The singer of victory" because during the Greco-Italian her songs were nationalistic and satiric of the enemy. Her songs became very popular and were widely sung. During the war she escaped to the Middle East and continued to sing for the soldiers.

**15 Destruction of the Thessaloniki Jewish Cemetery**

The cemetery of Thessaloniki existed since the 3rd century B.C.E. and was the largest of the Balkans with 500,000 graves. It was completely destroyed on 6th December 1942 by workers of the Municipality of Thessaloniki under the orders of the mayor and the governor of the city, Vassilis Simonides, who had been authorized by the Germans. Today the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki stands in its place.

**16 AiVat**

Poor village in the mountains surrounding Thessaloniki. Many of the housemaids came from there. Now it is called Diavata.

**17 Mussolini, Benito (1883-1945)**

Italian political and state activist, leader (duce) of the Italian fascist party and of the Italian government from October 1922 until June 1943. After 1943 he was the head of a puppet government in the part of Italy that was occupied by the Germans. He was captured and executed by Italian partisans.

**18 Haidari**

a concentration camp operated by the German 'Schutzstaffel' at the Athens suburb of Haidari during the Axis Occupation of Greece in World War II. Operating from September 1943 until it was shut down in September 1944, it was the largest and most notorious concentration camp in wartime Greece, becoming known as the 'Bastille of Greece.' It was a transit camp established on the grounds of a Greek Army barracks, and it is estimated that in the one year of its operation, some 21,000 people passed through it, including Jews, Italian POWs and Greek political prisoners.

The majority of these was transported north, to Auschwitz in the case of the Jews, or to forced labor in Germany, while others were detained for questioning by the Gestapo. It is estimated that ca. 2,000 inmates were executed there during the camp's operation. (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haidari_concentration_camp)

**19 Righteous Among the Nations**

A medal and honorary title awarded to people who during the Holocaust selflessly and for humanitarian reasons helped Jews. It was instituted in 1953. Awarded by a special commission headed by a justice of the Israeli Supreme Court, which works in the Yad Vashem National Remembrance Institute in Jerusalem. During the ceremony the persons recognized receive a diploma and a medal with the inscription "Whoever saves one life, saves the entire world" and plant a tree in the Avenue of the Righteous on the Remembrance Hill in Jerusalem, which is marked with plaques bearing their names. Since 1985 the Righteous receive honorary citizenship of Israel. So far over 20,000 people have been distinguished with the title, including almost 6,000 Poles.

**20 Evoia**

A widely spread peninsula northeast of Athens, connected with the main land, Greece, and through the strait of Euripus. It was used during WWII as a departure point for the boats leaving for Asia Minor and the Middle East.

**21 Tsesme or Chesmé**

Small port on the Aegean coast of Turkey; the place from where almost all the people who escaped to the Middle East by boat during WWII, usually with the help of partisans, embarked.

**22 Sochnut (Jewish Agency)**

International NGO founded in 1929 with the aim of assisting and encouraging Jews throughout the world with the development and settlement of Israel. It played the main role in the relations between Palestine, then under British Mandate, the world Jewry and the Mandatory and other powers. In May 1948 the Sochnut relinquished many of its functions to the newly established government of Israel, but continued to be responsible for immigration, settlement, youth work, and other activities financed by voluntary Jewish contributions from abroad. Since the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, the Sochnut has facilitated the aliyah and absorption in Israel for over one million new immigrants.

**23 Ios**

In Greece some of the small islands that were almost uninhabited, like Ios, Paxi, Sikinos, Kimolos, AiStratis, etc. were used as exile places for the people that disagreed with the government, such as communists, Jews, people from the Greek Resistance etc.

**24 '151'**

After the Fire of 1917, the Jewish Community acquired the large No. 151 hospital, which belonged to the Italian army and was located east of the Thessaloniki. 75 wooden structures and many brick

and cement structures were subsequently built to house the fire-stricken Jewish population.

**25 Vardaris neighborhood or Vardar de Hirsch**

Built after the 1890 fire thanks to a donation by Moise de Hirsch to house the fire victims and the Russian Jews who came seeking shelter in Salonica, fleeing from the pogroms in Russia. During the cccupation it housed 800 families.

**26 Veil, Simone (born 1927)**

French lawyer and politician who served as Minister of Health under Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, President of the European Parliament and member of the Constitutional Council of France. A survivor from the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp where she lost part of her family, she is the Honorary President of the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah. She was elected to the Académie française in November 2008. (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simone_Veil) 27 Greek Civil War (1946-1949): Also known as Kinima or Movement, fought from 1946 to 1949 by the Governmental forces, receiving logistical support by the United Kingdom at first and later by the United States, and the Democratic Army of Greece, the military branch of the Greek Communist Party (KKE), was the result of a highly polarized struggle between leftists and rightists which started from 1943 and targeted the power vacuum that the German occupation during World War II had created. One of the first conflicts of the Cold War, according to some analysts it represents the first example of a post-war Western interference in the internal politics of a foreign country, and it marked the first serious test of the Churchill- Stalin percentages agreement. (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_Civil_War)