

Josip's Grandparents



Photo of my grandparents Bojna and Sabetaj Levi, Sarajevo 1908. They are wearing the traditional costume of Sephardi Jews.

My maternal grandfather died in 1912 before I was born. My grandmother Bojna lived a very difficult life in Sarajevo and her sons had to support her. She always had something to do, she was very thin and quiet. My clearest memory of her is that when she finished her work she would knit

socks. The next day she would undo the socks and make new ones, day after day. When we would come to Sarajevo she would make us dilece, a famous Sephardic dish, and rice that she ground in a mill [dilece was made of ground rice with milk]. She had Hebrew letters and would use them to write everyone's name or make a Magen David. When she made pastel, we helped her to make a big fire in the oven because pastels are best when made quickly and on a strong fire. She always wore a tukada [hat, part of a national costume worn by Sephardic women]. She spoke Spanish and Serbo-Croatian with the children. We stayed with grandmother Bojna. It was a house across the street from Hotel Evrope. It had huge rooms with rounded windows, once it was probably a warehouse. When you entered there was a hallway, and between the apartments there were a wooden terrace. It had a big kitchen and pantry. In one corner there was a water pot where we drank water from. Above the bed there were pictures and details about when we were all born. There was a sofa-bed where I slept. The beds and closets in the bedrooms were engraved. Everyone would gather around the big table. Above the table there was a luster from which hung lamps which we lit for Shabbat. Once I was there for Tu B'Shevat, we went around the table and they put fruit in shoeboxes.