

## Going Up The Steps Of The Synagogue With My Father On Our Wedding Day



This picture was taken on our wedding day with Fani. In this photograph the person going up the stairs in front of me is my father who is seen bringing me to the synagogue.

My father Shalom Nesim Abuaf who was born in 1895, was born and raised in Kuzguncuk like his other siblings (A neighborhood on the Asian side where Jews settled). Like all other Jewish families of the time, my grandfather provided my father's education, along with his other children, in the

neighborhood Jewish school. (Unfortunately I do not know what grade level he attended). Even though my father was a very successful student, the financial difficulties faced by his father caused him to start working at a very young age. My father was proficient in Hebrew due to the education he received in school. He learned Judeo Espagnol at home since his family spoke this language in the house. In addition, my father spoke Turkish very well because of the environment he was in.

My father Nesim, first learned how to make a "fez" (a kind of dark reddish hat with a tassel that men used to wear at the time) around the 1910's, by becoming an apprentice to a tailor. My father was very competent, outgoing and shrewd. In 1914, during the first World War, he started producing, selling and repairing fez's in a store he managed on his own in Kuzguncuk, Daghamam (A part of a neighborhood on the Asian side). (I do not know if he had employees or partners working with him).

The ones who lived in Daghamam were usually members of the Jewish community. Because it was a small neighborhood, everyone knew each other, all the young people chatted, played, and interacted with each other. Their biggest event was attending the ceremony in the synagogue on the Sabbath, sing in the choir, and then congregate at the "Dezayuno" (breakfast) that took place after the services and sing together. One of these families, the family of Roza and Yusef Eskenazi had children named Verjini, Sara, Mishel and Mari Eskenazi, born in 1890 (who later became my mother), who studied in the same neighborhood Jewish school for a few grades (I do not know till which grade, she could read and write in Hebrew).

Mari Eskenazi also sang in the temple choir. My mother's voice was beautiful in addition to being physically beautiful. So my father and mother met during choir practices that took place on Saturdays. My father was attracted to my mother immediately, and opened up to her a short while later, however my mother rejected him for a while, but could not resist my father who was so kind and well-known in our community and if I am not wrong, they were married in 1912. I never asked if there was a reception after the wedding, I do not know. My father made his living manufacturing and selling "fez"s, and they moved to their own place to prove their families that they could manage on their own, and they were very happy.

Both my mother and father liked discipline, and were courageous, humane and cheerful people.

During the years, my family left their neighborhood Daghamam (on the Asian side, in the Uskudar district) because of a few fires that broke out, and immediately moved to Ortakoy which is on the European side where mostly Jews resided, when they found a house within their means. My uncle's family and my aunt did not move from their old neighborhood for a while longer.

My father was sharp and enterprising. In those times a lot of fires broke out due to the fact that the buildings were made of wood. Brick houses would be built in place of the burned ones. My father was convinced that in this situation, building supplies like cement, nails etc. would be in demand in this sector. Borrowing from friends with interest, he rented a small store within a short time and filled it up with supplies. In this way my father took a step in the second career of his life which was hardware dealership. He also sold oil-based paints in his store in addition to these supplies. My father had this distinction; he could create any color imaginable by the client other than the standard ones in circulation. These paints were water resistant and were protected for long years after brushing; they were like the "satin paints" of today. As you can see, my father

became a chemical engineer almost. His business went well, he took care of all of us comfortably. He never had extra money because he would always spend what he earned and pay the interest on the loans he took out.

My father was big and burly, portly, and he was slightly cross-eyed. Both my mother and father had white hair. He was a fabulous father and spouse. In 1953, a stone the size of a dove's egg appeared in his kidney. The doctors we took him to all said "No problem, this is a very easy operation. We will alleviate your problem and make you feel better in no time". My brother-in-law who was a soldier in Van came immediately upon hearing the news and even though he said "my dear father, don't you dare listen to these men, you are too portly and big, you would not be able to tolerate this operation", he had to return to Van because of his duties.

The pain my father endured became so strong that he had no choice but to surrender himself to medicine, and unfortunately we lost him in 1953, 3 or 4 days after the surgery. We interned him in the Haskoy Jewish cemetery.

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