

Rifca Segal As A Young Lady



This is me, Rifca Segal, at the age of 18, when I passed my high school graduation exam. My father was very proud of my success – back then, graduating from high school was considered what graduating from college is nowadays – and I wanted to take pictures and share them with my relatives and friends. My father's copy was in color, unlike this one.

I sat for my baccalaureate exam in 1946. I remember that my subject at the Physics oral exam was the electric bell. And I answered the theoretical questions perfectly. And this probably didn't sit well with the examining teacher, for the commission was made up entirely from outside teachers, so he asked me to draw it. It was as if someone was gripping my hand... I couldn't draw it. And they gave me a 4 [Ed. note: the equivalent of an E in the American system of grades]. Oh my, how

I cried. And I was so good at Physics. I cried just like a baby, I was bleating as they gave me the grade. But it wasn't an eliminatory system. If your overall grade was 6, it was good enough to pass. And I passed the baccalaureate exam, for my overall grade was higher than 6. I scored better grades for the other subject matters. I was very good at Chemistry, Mathematics was no completely out of the question.

I liked Mathematics, and I went to Bucharest at the Faculty of Mathematics, I sat for an admission exam, I passed it. But my parents couldn't really make ends meat, they couldn't support me, and my sister died, whom I loved enormously, and so I returned home, I entered the workforce. And then, when I got married, a girl friend and a friend of mine went to study the A.E.S. [the Academy of Economic Studies] under the optional attendance system. I wanted to go as well, but my husband said: I won't let you work, there's no reason for you to do this." And after approximately 3 years I said: "I want to have a degree myself. I feel capable of having one." And I enlisted myself at the A.E.S. in Bucharest under the optional attendance system – for it wasn't available in Iasi. My husband was a Mathematics teacher and he was the one who filtered my materials. But I didn't pass the state exam as well, because my husband said I didn't need it. He didn't want me to work.