

Rifca Segal With High School Colleagues



These are my high school classmates at the end of the eighth grade – the equivalent of today’s twelfth grade – after our graduation exam. I, Rifca Segal, am the first one from right to left in the front row. I had to work hard to prepare for the exam, so I look rather weak right now. The one next to me is Iudit Schwartz, who now lives in Israel. She went to medical school. The first from right to left in the middle row is Sisi Corber. Her name is Sisi Oisie now. She lives in Iasi and she’s a physician too. Next to her is Luta Moscovici, who went to the Polytechnic School and left for Israel. The one to the left is Surica Segal, who lives in Botosani. Then there’s Mircea Rauser, who left for Israel. Next to him is Lelea Tverling, who spoke Chinese and studied in the Chinese department in college. She used to be a translator in Bucharest, but I don’t know what became of her. To the left is Arivei – I forgot his first name –, who is an engineer in Israel. Then there’s Morell Segal. The fourth from right to left in the back row is Faibis. To the right there’s Niti Sert, who lives in Canada. The second from right to left is Luci Solomon, who, I believe, lives in Bucharest. The first from left to right is Lica Kohn. He works as an engineer in the United States. To the right there’s Marcica Holzman, a physician who was assigned to work in Galati and later left for Israel. I don’t know the names of the others. This was an entire class. Back then, classes had fewer students than today. All my classmates were Jewish.

I do my own praising: I was a very good pupil. As long as my parents lived in Sulita, I graduated 4 grades of primary school at the Jewish school. There was a Jewish school in Sulita, but we had to pass an exam at the end of each school year, which validated our graduating that year. There were 2 schools in Sulita, “Andreescu” and “Scurtu,” I passed my exams at “Scurtu.” After I graduated 4 grades of primary school, I went to high school in Botosani. I graduated the 1st and 2nd year of high school at a high school for girls called “Carmen Silva.” And I rented a room from someone, for my parents could afford to pay for that.

After 1941, I was no longer able to study at the Romanian school. All Jews were expelled from schools. After the Jewish High School was founded, I studied there. But I skipped a year, until this high school was founded. And then I sat for an exam to graduate the year – those of us who had

skipped a year were allowed to graduate 2 years in a single one. And I studied for an entire summer. The Jewish High School was founded in 1942, I entered the Jewish High School, and I graduated 3rd and 4th grade. But girls weren't allowed to study at this high school. They enlisted us, but they kept separate rolls. And there was an inspection once – I will never forget this scene –, and the principal stormed inside the classroom: “All the girls must run out of here immediately, for there is an inspection!” Well, we ran and we returned afterwards. You can imagine the situation we were in. That's how I studied. Classes were held in the rooms of the synagogue. Carol Mizes was the principal. He was a tall, handsome man, I believe his profession was that of a lawyer, and he couldn't work anymore – lawyers were disbarred as well. And I had Jewish teachers. Biology and zoology was taught by a pharmacist, our teacher of mathematics was actually a former teacher who was fired from the “Laurian” High School or from the “Carmen Silva” High School, which were high schools in Botosani.

And then, starting with the fall of 1944, we were allowed to attend the Romanian high school. The Jewish High School was recognized – there were school rolls, and everything else –, and I didn't lose the years during which I studied there. 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.