

My Father



This photograph was taken in Salonika, when my father was around 35-40 years old. As you can see in his hand in the picture, he used to wear a straw hat that was used in the old times. A stiff collar was attached over the shirt. Even though the shirt could be worn one or two days, the collar that was affixed could be changed. My father, Saul Modiano, was born in Salonika in 1887. He passed away in Istanbul in 1970. My mother, Ester Modiano [her maiden name is Kohen] was also born in Salonika in 1894, and passed away in Istanbul, in 1979. My parents are both buried at the Italian-Jewish Cemetery in Sisli, Istanbul. My father was of medium-height, and was slightly overweight. He had whitish hair. He had glasses, but only used them when he was reading. He did not wear a tie around the house, but he always wore one when he was outside. He always wore clean, fashionable clothes. My mother, Ester Modiano, was also of medium-height and was slightly chubby. She had a very reserved personality. Her hair was medium-length. She wore casual clothing both inside and outside the house. She usually wore lipstick, and used nail polish. My father was a very serious, introverted kind of man. He did not speak much, and when he did, he spoke with utmost care - as if he was weighing each word. He was a reserved man just like my mother was. My father was also very smart and perceptive. He did not have a lot of time to read, but he followed all major news of the day. My mother did spend a lot of her time reading. She graduated from a French school in Salonika. My parents both went to school in Salonika. The school my father attended was called 'Idadiye' back then. It was a special kind of Italian school. My father's native tongue was Italian, and my mother's was Spanish. They spoke in Spanish and French between each other and their own parents. When he lived in Salonika, my father used to

work as a regular employee at a firm. Later on, when he came to Istanbul, he founded his own business. He became a commissioned representative for some factories located in Europe. He also provided those European companies with insurance expertise, and handled their insurance needs. My father had significant responsibilities at Misne Tora. He was also an active member of the Italian-Jewish Community. He represented the Italian-Jewry in Turkey at the Chief Rabbi's office. At Misne Tora, he participated in end-of-the-year activities every year. During these activities, a number of different shows were put on, including a play put together by the Youth Commission. My father did not serve in the Turkish military because he was an Italian citizen.