

My Wife's Sister Ester



This photo was taken in the garden of the house where my wife Suzan Isman (nee Akkoen) was born and raised. The house in Kuzguncuk. At the time the photo was taken I was doing my military service and she had sent me the photo.

My wife, Suzan, is also from Istanbul. Her father Stefanya Akkoen, married Mme. Rebeka in 1905. (I don't know my mother-in-law's maiden name). They had settled down in Kuzguncuk, and had always raised their families there. [Jewish district on the Asian side]

Her father was a hard-working and a very clever man. He was engaged in the customs business. During those times most of the customs officers were non-Muslims [because they knew trade and languages]. Later on my father-in-law rented a hall on the Kuzguncuk pier, and ran a club operating as a casino during weekdays, and a cinema on weekends. My father-in-law was also a skilled enough bridge player to become the Bridge Champion of the times. Unfortunately, he was poisoned by something he ate, became sick, and lost his ability to speak. Naturally, we closed down these businesses slowly when he got sick.

My wife's English was very good, because she was a graduate of the British School in Istanbul (English High School for Girls) . Besides this, her French was also very good. Like I said, we were working at the same firm. We met and went out together. Her mother didn't want me, because of my low income, when we decided to get married. Nevertheless, against everything, we got married in the synagogue in Kuzguncuk, in May 1935. (not the one that is in use today, there was another one on the upper part of Kuzguncuk. I forgot its name.)

At those times, the weddings were not celebrated like today's ostentatious weddings. In the afternoon, as the whole family we went to the Novotni Garden, across Union Francaise in Tepebasi. We ate our dinner, and sat outside, as the season was favorable. It was very nice. We all returned home together, and went to work the next morning.

After we got married, we rented a flat from the apartment named "Belvu" [from the French "belle vue" meaning "nice view"] on Bankalar Street. These flats were so large that we rented it together with David Eskenazi and his wife, very close friends of ours who hadn't had any children and who loved ours as their own. They had two rooms, and we had two rooms and a living room. We shared the kitchen and the bathroom. As a result of this solution we found, paying the rent was not that hard.

After we got married, Suzan always gave her family what she earned. Her family came to live with us when her father got sick. Later on, when the financial situation of Moiz, Suzan's elder brother, improved, he took care of his parents. When my father-in-law died, my mother-in-law started living with us. Later on in 1957, she went to Israel with her younger son, Moiz, and died there in 1967.

Unfortunately my wife Suzan got very sick, and though we did everything to save her, we couldn't. She died in 1988, and was buried in Arnavutkoy. [The sephardic cemetery in Ulus was always called Arnavutkoy]. I miss her so much that, I go to visit her very often, and talk to her from heart to heart.