

Avram Merkado Natan With His Second Wife Simha Solomon Natan (nee Aladjem) In Israel



My second wife Simha Solomon Natan (nee Aladjem) and I in Israel in 1997.

I married again in 2004. I've been together with Simha Aladjem (her father's name) for ten years. We also met in the mountain. I have known my second wife ever since she was a child - she was born in 1944 in Ruse and her parents, especially her father, were great tourists. So, we met in the mountains. Her father Solomon Aladjem (upholsterer in a company) and her mother Rayna Aladjem (hairdresser) had been interned to Ruse and they met there.

Most of my friends are Bulgarians, but my wife's relatives are Jews. We organized a Jewish tourist club in 'Maccabi'. Now it still exists, although 'Maccabi' is no longer active. Everyone who wants comes to our club - Bulgarians, a Greek, two Armenians and a Russian woman came with us. We walk in the mountains. In the winter we go to Vitosha. In the spring we go to the Lozen Mountain, Plana Mountain and other places [all of them are mountains near Sofia]. We go out on Saturdays. Before I was a mountain guide - I knew the routes and organized groups to walk in Pirin, Stara Planina, Rila. Now, I go to the mountains with close friends, Bulgarians, whom I met 32 years ago on a trek in Rila Mountain. We still keep in touch and get together. Some time ago we went to the mountains a lot, but now not so often because one of our friends Georgi has the Parkinson's disease. Every Monday and Wednesday we play bridge in the Jewish cultural home. We are a group of four people, and one man who plays with us when someone is missing. We usually play backgammon the other days.

As for my relatives I keep in touch mostly with the cousins of my wife Simha. I meet my brother sometimes, but he is very busy, because he has to take care of his wife Yanka. I also call my cousin Avram Pinkas. But most of my relatives are in Israel. I went there before 1989. In 1965 I went to Israel with the Bulgarian national football team - we were in one group with Israel and I went there

for two days and a half. It was then that I decided to emigrate. I am not such a great football fan, but I had helped the son of a friend of mine, who was a student. My friend had connections and arranged my trip as a way to thank me. So, I agreed to go there for a couple of days to see my aunts and uncles. I had never been to Israel before that. My cousin and his friend there offered me to emigrate and convinced me that I would have a nice job. But I could not do it, and I already explained the reason.[It was because he had designed installations for Bulgarian military plants and was not allowed by the authorities.] I was alone on my trip and in the end of 1989 I went for a week to celebrate the New Year's Day - the first year after the changes. In 1997 Simha and I went together - her daughters also emigrated to Israel - they have families and two children each. Their names are Adela and Luiza. Adela is a nurse and Luiza works in a bank. I had to help my son and his wife, because she was studying. He works in a construction company and she is an accountant so I had to look after their children. Simha was at her daughters'. We stayed there for three months.