

With Friends At Kusadasi



A photograph taken on the seashore, during a trip we took to Kusadasi with friends.

The other people in the photograph: My friends Luna Kastoryano, her husband Izi Kastoryano and my wife Ester Modiano.

When I was governing Mishne Torah [an association founded to help support poor school children] Youth Commission, there was a wave of new candidates applying to become members of the Association. I, of course, had a secretary working with me - given my status as the President. Whenever a candidate wanted to apply, my secretary would have him/her fill out a form, and include a picture on his/her application.

I remember joking about it with my secretary when my wife-to-be's application form arrived on my desk. I said to her "What is this, are we going to open up a school here or what?" because the picture my wife submitted with her application form was one that was taken when she was a student. My secretary said to me "You accept her membership, and then we can deal with it later." My wife actually became a member 15 days after that. The first meeting she attended was during a Purim ball. She was sitting by herself on one corner of the ballroom. I asked my secretary "Who is this lady sitting over there at the corner?" She responded "That would be your student."

As a coincidence, we were supposed to have our Association's 50th-year meetings in a week's time. A bunch of us decided to take the day off, and go somewhere. Some of us were going to Yesilkoy, and others were going to go to Tarabya. I was actually going to meet a lady friend at 3:00 PM in Tunel. I remember waiting for her until 3:30 PM, but she never showed. Well, I decided to go over to Tarabya to meet my friends there. My wife-to-be was there as well. This was my opportunity to see her in a closer manner. After Tarabya, my friends decided to go over to the municipal casino in Taksim, where the Ceylan Hotel stands today. I invited my wife there as my friend. We started dating shortly after.

My wife and I were dating around the same time she was working at Odeon. We were not sure as to whether we both wanted to get married. Plus, my family did not have a final decision. In an effort to get to know Ester better, my father went over to her workplace with an excuse for wanting to

buy a three-wheeled bicycle for his nephew. He was also very close with Ester's managers. There, he had an opportunity to see her and talk to her even though it was not too comprehensive a talk. Her managers, meanwhile, had given for her excellent references. In the end, my father decided that Ester and I should get married.

We got engaged on the 28th of May, 1952. We stayed engaged for about a year, and then got married on the 31st of May in 1953 at the Italian Synagogue. My father was a member of the Governing Board for the Italian Jewish Community in Turkey. This is probably why our wedding was really crowded and colorful. At the same time, my father was a member of the 'Fakirleri Koruma Dernegi [Support Center for the Poor]. [23](#) So, all members from there attended our wedding with their significant others. Our whole family was also a member of the Misne Tora, and so all members from the Association attended our wedding as well. Actually, members of the Mishne Torah put together a ceremony team for the special day. It was composed of ten male and ten female schoolchildren dressed in clothing specifically prepared for our wedding.

My wife was the one who usually took care of the children. I would go to work early in the morning, and come home late. On weekends, however, I would take care of them, and we would usually go out together as a family. I believe that I have shown them the compassion a father should be able to show his children. I always tried helping them with their studies. Even though my wife had to drop out of school at seventh grade, she managed to continue educating herself at home, and augment her knowledge.

We have been living in the same apartment since my wife and I got married.

We used to go to the movies, plays and concerts together - as a family. At one time actually, we became members of the Konak Movie Theater in the Harbiye neighborhood. We went there every Sunday to see a movie. Before my wife had the accident, she used to go to the concerts that took place at the Ataturk Cultural Center every Saturday morning. I would come home on Saturdays after the morning prayer at the Synagogue, and read the paper or a book. We would go out together in the afternoons. On Sundays, we usually got together with three other families. The women played bridges together, and the men usually watched TV or chatted.

We went to Buyukada every summer. We had our own house there, so there was no need really to take a vacation and go somewhere during the summer. Only after selling that house in 1995, we began taking week-long vacations to Europe or different cities in Anatolia such as Cesme with some friends.

I used to frequently travel for business - mostly to Europe. I went to Italy, France, Belgium and Israel. My wife and I also took many trips to Europe with another couple.