

Nissim Kohen's Father Mihael Kohen And Daughters - Jana Kohen And Rina Kohen



This photo shows part of the street where I was born - Gyueshevo Str. In Sofia. The photo was taken in 1964. My father Mihael Kohen is on the photo with his two granddaughters in front - Jana Kohen and Rina Kohen who is hugging him.

My grandfather's house was on 12 Slivnitsa Street. Later the street was renamed to 7 Gyueshevo Street. Our house was made of adobe and at first it had only one room and an entrance hall. Later another room was added as well as another extension, which was the house of my uncle Rafael Kohen. My father's elder brother Eliya Kohen also lived in that yard. His house was the most solid one. My father Mihael Kohen took a half of one of my grandfather's rooms and enlarged it. He also built another room with a small entrance hall where he lived with his family. There were some inconveniences. The toilets were outside and we had no running water inside. There was a tap on the street which we used. We had electricity. Later we had running water in the yard, but not in the house. The street, on which we lived became all muddy when it rained. And so did most of the streets in the Jewish neighborhood.

My father Mihael Kohen tried many things in life. He spent eight years in captivity during World War I. He was held captive by the French army near Thessaloniki as a soldier from the Bulgarian army. After that he worked as a tinsman. He took part in the construction of the roof of the first building of the Sofia University. He traded with second-hand products. Later, together with an uncle of my

mother's Chelebi Haravon, and with the active help of my uncle Mois Haravon, he managed to set up a haberdashery on Lomska Street [present-day George Washington Street, near the central Sofia synagogue], but those were the years of the great crisis in 1929-1932 and he was forced to close it down. Then he started work as a street vendor and walked around the neighborhood with a tray selling elastic cords, tights and haberdashery. Then he made a warehouse selling coal near our house. At that time people could not afford to buy a lot of coal and came to buy 5-10 kilos. In this way my father was able to support us and helped the people in the neighborhood. That continued until the passing of the anti-Jewish laws when he was forbidden to work.

I have two daughters - Rina Kohen and Jana Geron. Rina graduated the secondary polytechnical school in Sofia. She works in accounting. My other daughter Jana has a degree in statistics from the Economy Institute and works in the Statistics Institute. She is married to Mishel Geron and has two sons - Emil and Mihael.

In 1962-63 as employees of design organizations my wife and I were able to get a flat. We lived there until 1985 when blocks of flats were built on the site of the house where we were born and we received a flat in one of them. When my daughter Jana married, my wife and I went to live there.