

Elementary School Souvenir



I was born on May, 8th, 1924 in Istanbul as the child of a middle class family and grew up facing a lot of challenges.

I lost my mother when I was 3 years old. Even though my father remarried, he raised me and my older sister himself.

I am 7 years old in this photograph. It is a souvenir from first grade. I was studying in Okchu Musa elementary school, on Okchu Musa street in Kasimpasha, close to our home.

This was a Turkish school. The lady teacher in this photograph was our only teacher from first to fifth grade.

I would go around 8:00 in the morning, and return home at 4:00 in the afternoon. I walked there since it was close.

Among these children, the two girls sitting in front, in the center were twins.

They are no longer alive today, I think. The only thing I remember, the name of the girl sitting in first row, on the left was Klara.

There were 6-7 Jewish kids along with me in this class. The rest were Muslim.

Since our elders spoke Judeo-Spanish at home, I learned Turkish in school.

I spoke and read Turkish quite well when I was around 8 - 9 years old.

When they spoke Turkish at home though, I made fun of my elders because of their pronunciation.

I was a child of the streets and I ditched school very often to play. My favorite class was Turkish class.

I loved reading a lot. My last teacher was Mr. Nurettin. We had a single teacher.

There were classes such as geography, history, Turkish, social studies and math. There were no religious studies and foreign language education then.

I liked all my teachers a lot in general.

I never had a long-term friendship from my school years.

When I was 11 years old, in last grade, I used to spend time together with the most beautiful girl in class, during lunch break.

I think her name was Beki. We were usually together on the way to and from school too.