

Sura Milstein As A School Girl



This is me, Sura Milstein, during high school, I was 16-17 - during the late 1930's. The photograph was taken in Dorohoi.

I liked reading stories, and when I had money I used to buy a storybook. Creanga was my favorite. [Ed. note: Ion Creanga (1837-1889) is a classic of Romanian literature, acknowledged for the craftsmanship of his yarns, fairy tales and stories; his most celebrated autobiographical work is 'Amintiri din copilărie' [Memories of My Boyhood].] Ana Safir, my mother's sister, was the one who looked after me and bought me books every now and then. She gave me money or went with me to the bookshop and asked me to choose a book that she would then buy for me. Also, there were libraries in Dorohoi. There was the Jewish Community library and the state library.

I wasn't involved in Zionist movements. We only had - like every household - one of those blue boxes with Magen David, and we, the family, used to put some spare change in it, and someone would come to collect it. We had that box since 1925-1927, I think.

I spoke Yiddish with my grandparents. I didn't speak Yiddish with my parents that much - mainly Romanian. In time, I even almost forgot Yiddish. And I refused to learn how to write, how to read, I - ridiculous - didn't want to. There was an elderly woman in Bucecea who went to people's houses to teach children [how to read and write Hebrew] and she was a little senile, she smelled of urine; I didn't like her and I didn't want to learn. As for the cheder, I stopped going there. I don't even know if my sister went to the cheder.

I went to school in Dorohoi. I started attending primary school when I was 6 - in 1928. There was also a Jewish school - but no high school -, yet my parents enlisted me at a state school. I studied

for 4 years there, then I completed 8 years of high school in Dorohoi, at the State High School 'Queen Mary.'

I graduated high school in 1940. That was the last year when [Jewish] people could attend state schools, and starting with the fall of 1940 it was no longer possible [1]. But Jews founded a Jewish high school. They brought 2 unemployed Jewish teachers from Siret and a Jewish girl from Bucecea itself, who had a degree in French and was unemployed, too; they also brought a few lawyers knowledgeable about teaching who filled the remaining departments. And they purchased school manuals - as long as they could find them - and that high school was in existence until I don't know when, for we were deported in the meantime, in 1941. The high school kept providing education for the children and parents that were left there.