

Vida Eskenazi With Jews Interned At Hvar



Italian prison camp at Hvar (Croatia), 1943. We stayed at Hvar from February until June 1943. In the picture are mostly Jews from Sarajevo and Mostar . We were settled at hotel whose owner was Tonci. He was so kind to us. He was a guest of many of us who survived and he was rewarded by the new government for everything what he done for Jewish refugees. There, I fell in love for the first time with Gracia Abinun. She was 3 years younger. She was officially my first love. We met each other in Israel many times. Mostar was the destination for the majority of Bosnian Jews from Sarajevo and western Bosnia. All those who were able to reach Mostar were saved. There were two or three families there from Zagreb. That is how we reached Mostar. There was a Jewish community in Mostar, which had its own kitchen, where we received two meals a day. However, because of some agreement with the Independent State of Croatia, the Italian authorities had to hand over Mostar to the Independent State of Croatia. The Italians knew that the soon as the Ustache enter Mostar they would come after the Jews first. So, the Italians organized to have us transferred to an island that remained under Italian annex. We were transferred from Mostar to Jelsa island, and then to the city of Hvar. They helped us. We had our own kitchen in some deserted hotel on Jelsa, and one part of the hotel was in deserted apartments. Our women organized themselves and we had a stove and wood from the surrounding forests. We children collected oak-apples. Every seven days the Italian authorities gave us sugar, flour, their pasta, parmesan cheese and jelly according to the number of members. Each of the adults had to register at the police station every day that they were here. After Jelsa, where we were for three or four months, we were transferred to Hvar where we put up in five hotels which were empty because there was no tourism. We were in hotel 'Slavija' which had a wonderful owner named Tonci Maricic, who gave us everything. He left us alone to organize ourselves and he solved all the problems. The Italians paid for this, but it was important how he treated us. After liberation many people went to him and he came mainly to Sarajevo and Zagreb. This friendship lasted as long as he was alive. Then the Italian occupational authorities decided that all Jews who were on Hvar, Korcula, Lopud and Kuparij should be transferred to Rab. In the picture is my sister (sitting row, second from the right) and next to her Gracija Abinun, my first lover, now she is a widow. In the picture are also: Luncika Levi who lives in Israel, her sister Hanika Levi, today she is already a great-grandmother, Erna Gan, Erna Pinto lives in Jerusalem, she is a widow, Mr. and Mrs. Cajt who are the parents of a member of

our community, Vera Mihajlovic. He was a waiter in a hotel, the food was cooked on the first floor and he would bring it down to the dining room on the ground floor and serve us. Their child is on the picture as well, I do not know her name. There are also Benjanimun Abinun-Binko, Gracija Abinun's brother, Icik Gaon, Sita Salom who was active in the community, he moved to Australia and died a year ago. Binko Musafija became a professor at the Sarajevo University. He came very ill from Sarajevo to Belgrade with the refugees in 1992 when the war in Bosnia began. We buried him in Belgrade. Nebojsa Samardzic read kadish for him, I did not have the heart to do it, he was my best friend. I'm in the picture, too and Gracija Abinun's mother. Together our families had one very big room. The children in the picture survived and that is ten of us.