

## Aristide Streja



The photo was taken in a Bucharest studio, in 1929. This is me at the age of 7. I was very proud with my clothes, and especially with my pockets. I, Aristide Streja [Ed. note: He changed his name from Wechsler to Streja after World War II.], was born in Bucharest on 19th December 1922. I had a sister who was 7 years older than me and a brother who was 6 years older. When I was in the first year of my life, both of them were in primary school. They would play together - they were still children when I was very young. My mother took care of the three of us. I used to play with the circle; it was one of my favorite games before I went to school. I didn't go to kindergarten - we didn't have kindergartens back then. My school was on the Independentei Embankment, opposite from a tanning factory, the Mociornita factory. It was a public school and I went there for 4 years. I

don't have any friends from that period, and I can't remember if I made friends with anyone in that school - I was too young. I was a relatively good student. While in primary school, I didn't enjoy any subject in particular, except maybe Math. When there was no school, I would play in the neighboring streets, like Aurora St., with some friends who lived nearby. My sister and brother looked after me to a certain extent, but they didn't take me play with them - they just helped me with my homework. They made my parents look after me; they didn't really like to do it themselves because they thought they wasted their time on me. But they loved me and I didn't have any conflicts with them. Afterwards I went to the Matei Basarab High School, because my brother had gone there too. [Ed. note: The Matei Basarab High School is one of the oldest and most prestigious secondary schools in Bucharest. It was located in the vicinity of the Great Synagogue and of the Jewish quarter. The children of many outstanding Jewish families went to this high school.] I studied there from the 1st year until the 6th year, when I was kicked out because I was a Jew - this happened in 1939-1940. I had very good teachers. There was the principal, Stoenescu, who taught Math. There was the History teacher, Ion Tatoi, an author of textbooks. He was a great teacher who came to class, sat down and taught us history as if he were narrating a novel or telling us a story. When we grew older, we had a teacher of Romanian, Perpessicius, who was a literary critic. [Ed. note: Perpessicius (1891-1971), literary critic, literary historian and poet. He managed the 'Universul literar' - 'Literary Universe' - magazine between 1925 and 1927. He was a literary reviewer for Radio Bucharest between 1934 and 1938. Between 1929 and 1951 he served uninterruptedly as a teacher of Romanian at the Matei Basarab High School in Bucharest.] Our Latin teacher was Chiriac, an author of textbooks too. I was a relatively good student in Latin. I remember he once caught me with my lesson not learnt and he gave me a 1. But I generally got good grades. I didn't take private lessons. I studied French and Italian in high school. Our Italian teacher was a young woman named Constanta, and learning from her was a pleasure.