

Sofi And Nissim Uziel With Friends



This is a photo of my husband, Nissim Leon Uziel and I at the zoo in Sofia. My husband is the first one on the left and I am the woman next to him. The picture was taken in the 1940s. I met my husband through Hakoah, in the sports club. I married him in January 1943 in the synagogue in Sofia. My husband, Nissim Leon Uziel, was unemployed. When he was interned to a camp in Gigen in 1943, I was interned to Pleven. Gigen was a camp for Jews. Jewish men used to be taken there from February to December; then they let them go home because they were all ill. My husband was taken to Zvanichevo first, then to Mihalkovo, then somewhere along the Struma River and finally to Gigen. He spent four years in forced labor camps altogether. They worked hard there; they constructed bridges. They had to wade in water up to here [pointing at the height of her chest]. Different locations, different rivers... There were only Jews. A boy even drowned in the Iskar River. Our life was a great tragedy. My hair stands on end when I think of those years. Could I endure all that now? I was in Pleven from 24th May 1943 till October 1944. This is the reason I'm so ill now -I lived through very hard times during the evacuation. I returned from Pleven to Sofia by train. I was pregnant at that time and gave birth to my son, Leon Nissim Uziel, on 7th December 1944. At the beginning my husband worked as a carpenter and that way he managed to provide for me and the baby. We lived with my mother who helped me looking after the baby. Later on my husband started working for the Trade Unions as an organizational worker. My husband used to go on business trips around Bulgaria, but mostly to the Soviet Union. He was an organizational worker. He organized the log-cutting site in Komi. Often he would get a call in the middle of the night; we've had a phone since 1946. He was involved in organizing many things. My husband was chairman of the Timber Industry Workers Trade Union. He used to organize the work of timber loggers in different regions of the country. He has been to Hungary and the USSR. He took me along, to Bucharest, Hungary and Poland.