

Isak And Hayim Franko



This is a photo of my husband Isak Franko with his brother, Hayim Franko. The photo was taken at the beach of Heybeliada, the third of the Prince's Islands on the Marmara Sea.

My husband, Isak Franko, was born in Kirklareli in 1919. [Thrace, European Turkey] His mother, Franka Franko wasn't a well-educated lady. She could even have been considered as semi-literate. Though she herself claimed to know how to read and write, I never remember her reading a newspaper. His father, Yomtov Franko, on the other hand was engaged in the leather trade. They were a family who had been affected by the events which took place in 1934 in Thrace. Jewish families' houses and work places were looted during these Thrace events. They moved to Istanbul overnight leaving all of their possessions behind. The Jews, who had come to Istanbul the night the Thrace events took place were either placed at a hotel by the community, or they stayed over at their relatives' homes. They went back to Kirklareli to close up their homes and work places after the events had cooled down. But of course, they experienced great financial loss during these times.

My husband Isak Franko had two siblings. Roza was born in the year of 1922. She was very fond of reading.

My husband's brother, Hayim Franko was a reckless young man. He was late to his military class one day during his last year at the Austrian High School [an Austrian missionary school subsidized by the Austrian government]. When his teacher asked him to salute, he refused. His teacher told him, that he would register his behavior into his records. Hayim Franko later on started studying

medicine after graduating from high school. Later on he decided to use his right to serve in the military as an officer, and therefore postponed his education. This right was given to high school graduates only. But his military teacher had done what he told him, and marked his childish behavior in his records. Hayim Franko had to serve as a soldier, which was longer in his military service. In this way, he failed to complete his medical studies, and went into business with his elder brother and father. Later on he married Viktuar Abeni. Their first child, Frida died from leukemia at the age of 6, and said farewell to life in a short period of time. We learned about her disease after a continuous sore throat which wouldn't heal. It was a kind of cancer which spread very fast, and the little girl died within a period like 11 months. My sister-in-law, Viktuar Franko, never pronounced her daughter's name again throughout her life. She only went to the cemetery with me once a year. She would cry that day there, and would carry her sadness only in her heart the other 364 days. There is still a porcelain trinket of a girl over Viktuar Franko's bed. One must know my sister-in-law very well to interpret this. If she wants definitely to indicate a date or an event, then she would say "el anyo del malor" meaning the "year of the disaster". The couple, Hayim and Viktuar, later on had two sons named Tovi and Cuda.

My husband, Isak Franko, started his business life by doing the work he took over from his father. Isak Franko acted in an amateur theatre group which he and his friends had formed at the age of 18, on Heybeliada [one of the islands in the Marmara Sea, which are called The Princess Islands.] I was 8 years old then and would sing songs during the intervals, or between acts to enable the actors to change their costumes. After seeing each other for the first time, my husband always joked saying "I picked you up the first time I saw you, but waited for you to grow up". Only, after 8 years from this first meeting, Heskiya Hatem and Soli Hatem, [my husband's friends and at the same time distant relatives of my grandmother from her father's side] introduced us to each other again. We came together one New Year's Eve and went to the cinema the following day. Isak Franko announced his intention of marrying me through our common friends. When my family told me that there was someone who wanted to marry me, I said if it was Isak Franko, then I would agree.