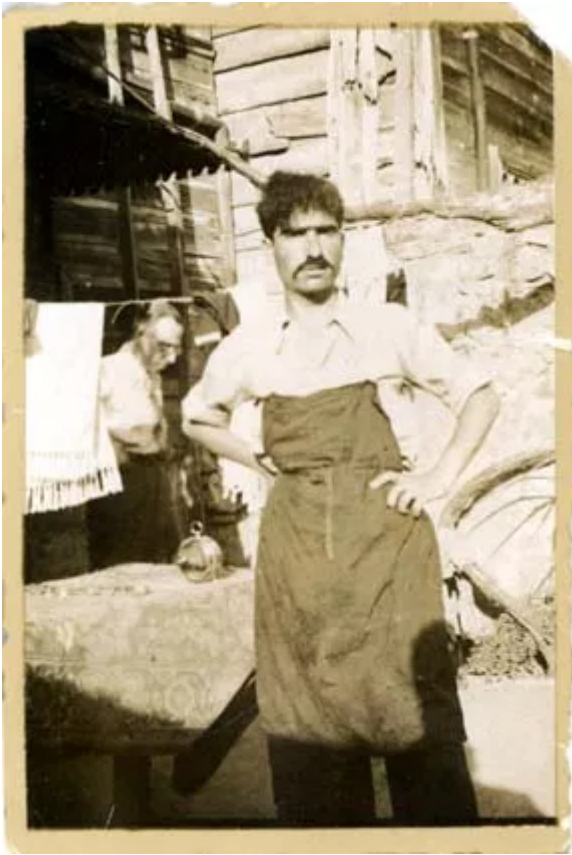


Isak Franko As An Actor



This is an interesting photo of my husband, Isak Franko. You can see Isak in the front part of the photo and the man standing behind the washing line is my father. When this photo was taken, my husband was barely 18 years old and he and his friends had formed an amateur theatre group and were staging a play.

You know, years later, my grandson Ilker also appeared in a play staged by Dostluk Yurdu Dernegi [a Jewish youth club in Istanbul, founded 1966] and everyone said he was very talented and kept asking me who he took after. I always remembered my husband's acting on the stage at Heybeliada and that is why I always replied, "he takes after his grandfather".

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, 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 Prince's 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.

I remember a very happy atmosphere when it comes to my wedding memories. We got married at the Zulfaris Synagogue, which is used as a museum today, on the 6th of June in 1948. This synagogue had a positive feature for the wedding ceremonies. It was regarded as good luck for the brides to climb up the stairs till they reached the tevah. There is a staircase with 15-20 steps at the entrance of the Zulfaris Synagogue. All the girls who were single at that moment, my cousins, my friends from the neighborhood, all wrote their names on the soles of my shoes. [There was a belief that to write one's name on the sole of a bride's shoe would cause a single girl to get married] My friends refreshed my make-up. (In those times there were no professional make-up people to come and make up the bride and her family like there is today.) Actually, they were watching me with a little bit of envy. Though I was the youngest one among the cousins I was the one who got married the earliest. I was 18 years old. I had rented both my wedding dress and the veil, but I had had my veil made according to my taste. Our wedding was quite a modest ceremony, but all of our crowded family members, and all of Ortakoy was there. After all the bride was from Ortakoy. My bridal veil got ripped by a cat the day following the wedding. Consequently, we had to buy it. We went to Yalova [a city near Istanbul, which is famous for its spas] for our honeymoon.