At The Beach

A photograph taken in Büyükada in summer. I spent my childhood in Buyukada... We went to Buyukada every summer. We had our own house there, so there was no need really to take a vacation and go somewhere during the summer. Only after selling that house in 1995, we began taking week-long vacations to Europe or different cities in Anatolia such as Cesme with some friends. The vacations I spent in Buyukada can be classified into several different periods - my childhood years, my teenage years, years when I was single and older, and finally my married years... When I talk about my childhood years in Buyukada, the first thing that comes to my mind is that we were four close friends back then. In fact, one of them recently passed away. When I was a kid, I remember going to the Buyukada Synagogue every Friday evening. This was during summertime of course. I went there from when I was eight to sixteen. The chief rabbi there, Rabbi Eliya Eskinazi was a close friend of my father's. He taught me so much. I remember saying the Mirha and Avit prayers every morning back then. Rabbi Eskinazi had also put together a chorus group, which I was a member of. We sang during some prayers read on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings. I would only go to that synagogue during summertime because it was very close to our house in Buyukada. I was born in Istanbul in 1926. In 1936, right when I was about to begin elementary school, Mussolini passed a new law that affected me and my family members. According to this law, all males, who were Italian citizens, had to study at Italian schools worldwide. If not, they risked losing their citizenship when they became eighteen. I first went to school in 1939. In 1943, when Italy signed a partnership agreement with Germany, the Jewish students were

no longer allowed to be Fashist boy scouts. We could still attend the Locale even though we were Jewish, but we were not allowed to be boy scouts. Nor were we allowed to participate in the Locale's activities. We were only allowed to continue being students after that year. After elementary school, in junior high there were the science and the accounting sections. I chose accounting. Accounting was my favorite course. I graduated with six students, one of whom was a female. We all received accounting diplomas. I liked all of my teachers, most of whom were Italian. Students and teachers were very close to each other. I did not study English at school. I played the violin for seven years, I could play a lot of musical pieces. I quit in my youth, today I don’t even remember the notes. I was very close with two friends outside of school. One was Nesim Behar, and the other was Bensiyon Cukran, who unfortunately passed away recently. We always got together in a mixed, co-ed group. We had some Catholic students in our school as well. For example, the famous script writer Giovanni Scognamillo was my classmate in high school. During my years in elementary school, and the first couple of years in middle school, I was very interested in playing with maquettes. I was a member of both the volleyball and basketball teams at school. I did not participate in political activities much. As for cultural activities, I read a poem for the Etifani Holiday when I was in fifth grade. In order to prepare for my presentation, my father and I went to the Sumerbank store to buy some new clothes and shoes [Etifani Holiday is a Christian holiday, during which a cross is placed in the Holy Water]. I would spend the weekends with my mother and father. In my family, all traditions mandated by our religion were strictly followed. Holidays, Pesach and the Seder of course, Rosh Hashanah… My mother would make all kinds of puddings during Shavuot. During Purim, she would make a variety of pies made with honey or "Orejas de Aman" as well as "Borekitas del muez" [quiches]. In order to make orejas de aman, she would prepare some dough first. She would then roll it out, cut it in two pieces, and fry it with vegetable oil. We would eat it with margarine and melted honey or granulated sugar. Unfortunately, I did not get to have bar-mitzvah ceremony because the date of the ceremony fell on September 16th-17th. World War II had broken out on the 1st of September, 1939. And, therefore, all our bar-mitzvah preparations went in vein. We were supposed to celebrate it in Buyukada. After a religious ceremony at the Buyukada Synagogue, we were planning on celebrating it on Sunday at home with my family and friends. Many people had gotten invited. I specifically remember that food was going to be served as an a-la-carte buffet. Unfortunately, everything fell through with the beginning of the War. I put on my tefilim on a Thursday, and was asked to go to the synagogue on Saturday for a prayer. That was it.