

Iancu And Rifca Segal With Friends



This picture was taken in Botosani in 1958 or 1959. The corner that is visible behind us no longer exists – it got demolished. I, Rifca Segal, am the one on the right. From me to the left there's Isac Milstein, the husband of a very good friend of mine, Minuta Milstein, who's the first from left. The second one from left to right is my husband Iancu Segal. The one in the middle is Bella Rapaport.

I, Rifca Segal, was born in 1928 in Sulita. My husband, Iancu Segal, was older than me. But it didn't matter. I thought of him as being younger than me. He was born in Stefanesti, which is also located in the county of Botosani.

I met my husband at some lectures we attended here, in Botosani. The ones formerly held by the Party Cabinet, they were party lectures. He was in charge of propaganda, I attended the lectures, and he walked me home one evening, then again on another evening... I attended these lectures once a month. But a lot of people attended these lectures, teachers... It was nice, I liked it, for it brought people together. Everybody attended these lectures, they made you attend them – [if] you didn't attend them, you were against the party. I liked the poems very much. And once we discussed the poem "Glossa" as part of the lectures [Ed. note: written by Eminescu, Mihai (1850-1889)]. And as I walked home with my husband, he accompanied me and we talked. He too liked poetry very much – he was a sentimental person, even if he studied Mathematics. But you should see how good my memory is! He used to recite me another one of Eminescu's poems: "Cu maine zilele-ti adaugi, / cu ieri viata ta o scazi. / si ai de-a pururea in fata [Avand cu toate astea-n fata] / numai ziua cea de azi [De-a pururi ziua cea de azi]." ["With life's tomorrow time you grasp, / Its yesterdays you fling away, / And still, in spite of all remains / Its long eternity, today." Translated by Corneliu M. Popescu http://www.gabrielditu.com/eminescu/with_time_u_grasp.asp]. He was quite the philosopher, this Eminescu. That's how we met, we fell in love, there were even certain hindrances... anyway.

We got married in 1955. We had both a religious and an official ceremony, absolutely everything. First we got married at the registrar's office, at the Town Hall, for they wouldn't perform the religious ceremony otherwise. And we couldn't not be married religiously because of our parents. It would have upset them if we didn't. But I would have rather we didn't, to be honest. These were the customs laid down from times immemorial by our forefathers, grandparents, great-grandparents, parents... It isn't so important nowadays, but it was back then.

The religious ceremony wasn't performed at the synagogue. They brought the canopy to my parents' house, for I was a member of the party and so was my husband, and they would have expelled us from the party, had they known we had a religious ceremony performed. It wouldn't have been such a disaster if they expelled us from the party, but they would have automatically kicked out my husband from the educational system. It was terrible. The ceremony was attended by my parents, our wedding sponsors - Itic, my husband's brother and his wife -, one of the grandmothers who were still alive, the one from my mother's side of the family, the other one, poor soul, was no longer alive, and by 2 girl friends who were close to me - one of them was Minuta and the other was Trudi, one of them died and the other is living in Israel - with their husbands. That was it. There was no one else present. We were afraid to invite anyone else - for fear they could inform on us. You couldn't trust anybody. And we covered the windows, I remember it as if it were yesterday, so that you couldn't see inside the house. It was as if we committed a crime back then. God forbid! But the wedding was performed by the book, no detail was left out. With a canopy, you walk around it three times - the groom, the bride, the wedding sponsors and the parents, all in a file. They walk around the altar [the bimah] in the synagogue. I didn't have this opportunity, I walked around the rabbi. [Editor's note: The bride usually gets around the groom three (or seven) times at the wedding under the chuppah (canopy).] The name of the rabbi who performed our religious ceremony was Smucler. And then the groom and the bride stand next to each other and the rabbi offers the groom a drink, and then the groom gives the bride a drink from that blessed wine, then the glass is placed in a handkerchief, and the groom must step on it and brake it. And they say that if he manages to break the glass properly, it is he who will be the rooster in the home. I told my husband: "Don't break it properly, for I want it to be me who rules, not you." He broke it, but he wasn't the rooster in our home. No, he was gentle, kind... And we organized a meal after the wedding ceremony. It wasn't like in a restaurant, it was a regular meal. It was during winter, in November, we had no eggplants, no tomatoes, we had soup, meat, they managed to bake a cream cake, and it was very modest. People had no money back then, where could one get the money from...