

My Wife Erna



This photograph was taken of Erna, the wife of Nesim Alkabes who is in the center, during a stroll with friends. She does not know the name of the place or of her friends I met my wife Erna Adoni, who was born on December 25th, 1924 and raised in Kadiköy, in 1947 at a party given by a mutual friend, and we liked each other. Because she is a graduate of St. Benoit like me, she speaks it as well as I do. When we decided to get married, Erna was 22, and I was 27. We went to ask for her hand from her father. I asked for a dowry of 25 thousand liras but he indicated he could not. He gave me a counter offer: -"I will give you 10 thousand liras. You live with us for 2-3 years until you have enough savings (Meza franka, [Live-in son-in-law]) , you won't be responsible for any expenses, in this way you will save money". I loved Erna so much that of course I accepted this offer. Other than my father-in-law, Erna also had an offer: -"Look Nisim, I am a fan of Fenerbahçe, you are a fan of Galatasaray. If you do not become a fan of Fenerbahçe I will not marry you" ...[The most important two soccer teams in Turkey] I was obliged to accept and we had our civil ceremony on June 5th, 1947 in a place called 6.Daire [The office where weddings are officiated belonging to the municipality of Shishane, a neighborhood on the European side where Jews live]. Following that we married at the Zülfaris Synagogue on August 10th, 1947 [On the European side, in Karaköy, where the Jewish museum is located now]. After our wedding, we spent our honeymoon in Tarabya Hotel for 2 days [On the European side, overlooking the Bosphorus, one of the trendiest hotels of the time where all rooms overlooked the water, today unfortunately it has been transferred to the private sector and is in ruins] and Bursa Çelik Palas for 4 days. I was done with military service then and was working with my father. Our financial situation while we were raising our kids was very good. Erna and I had three daughters from our union. Our oldest daughter Sara was born in 1948, Rosita in 1950, Stella in 1954. All three of our daughters attended elementary school in Isik Lisesi. Sara and Stella finished Saint Benoit French highschool later on. Rosita, on the other hand,

graduated from Robert College. After completing their education, our oldest daughter Sara, married Erol Penso following 8 years of dating, on March 29th, 1970, in Neve Shalom. They always lived on the European side, in a modern house. They raised two sons named Ceki (1972) and Niso(1974). Our daughter Sara always wished to study in college, while she was raising her family, (1997) she entered the university placement exam which is very hard and got accepted to the French Language and Literature faculty in İstanbul Üniversitesi, graduated in 4 years. She has the right to translate and translates books and scientific articles. Their son Ceki has been married to a nice girl for two years, Niso on the other hand is engaged, G-d willing we will marry him in December. Currently we reside in the same apartment. Our middle daughter Rosita married Jojo Balibarisseev (September 30th 1973), a chemical engineer who graduated from the Bosphorus University, in NeveShalom after finishing highschool.... My son-in-law worked for long years with Charles Danon who owns the Istanbul branch of Guido Modiano which is centered in Italy. In 1980, Mr. Guido offered my son-in-law a job in Italy since he was very happy with his work. In this way the family moved to Milan. Their two children Semi (1977) and Rifka (1976) are now grown up. Their son Semi works in a very important advertising company in Italy. Their daughter Rifka studied child psychology in a university in London. During that time she married Remi Menenson (Ashkenazi Jew, French origin) in 2004. They currently reside in London. Rifka works as a child psychologist in a Jewish school in London. Our youngest daughter Stella graduated from the Bosphorus University with a degree in chemical engineering with outstanding achievement. With the help of the Israeli government she did her masters and doctorate in "The Weismann Institute of Science" in Rehovot for 8 years. After graduating she sent all her diplomas to New York and applied for a job. Of course she was accepted, she has been working as an academic for 20 years while continuing her research. She is now a United States citizen and is single. She comes every summer to Istanbul for 3 weeks to see us.