

Alice Raphael



This is my sister, Alice Raphael, nee Springer, when she was 16. The photo was taken in 1954 when she graduated from Unirea high school, here, in Brasov, she was wearing the uniform in this photo.

Alice was born in Bucharest in 1938, she was one year younger than me. We moved to Brasov in 1945, because my father, Carol Springer, took over his father's cabinet. The first grade we studied in Bucharest; the rest of the grades, up to the sixth, which back then meant high school, I studied in the Jewish school in Brasov. After elementary school, my sister and I went to Unirea high school in Brasov; it was a school for girls only back then. We started in the same grade, although she was one year younger than me; my parents wanted us to be at the same level with our studies. I liked

all of my teachers: they were good people who really cared for our education; it was impossible not to respect them. I didn't like the mathematics teacher though; mathematics was quite a pain for me! I remember one time the Romanian literature and language teacher said to my colleagues, after a term paper: 'Shame on you, girls, two foreign students wrote better about Romanian literature and language than you!' She was talking about my sister and me. I made friends with most of my classmates, no matter their religion, but mostly with the ones who were well brought up.

I always got along very well with Alice, but our temperaments were very different. She was a beautiful child, and therefore rather spoiled. She was everyone's darling, and she took advantage of that. I spoiled her too; and as the elder sister, I had to give her attention and support. For example, she spent all her free time reading. She didn't have much of a dexterity, so I did things for her, like wrapping her books, cleaning her shoes, sewing her clothes; all this time she was reading. Mother got upset, she told her she had to learn how to do things as well, but she didn't; she knew she could count on me. I didn't mind helping her like this, if I had, I wouldn't have done it. I was very attached to her. Even nowadays, we take care of each other, we even exaggerate: when one of us had family problems, we tried to keep it from the other as long as we could, so that we wouldn't disturb the other's life with personal problems. We hardly ever fought. She was snappier and more stubborn than me as a child, but I usually gave in because I didn't want to fight. We only had a few discussions.

After high school, Alice and I went to college in Bucharest, where we studied medicine [dentistry]. Those six years were hard and we had to study a lot. We didn't stay in the hostel; we rented a place because our parents wanted us to have the best conditions to study. And we did: we studied all week, Saturdays until 6 o'clock in the evening, and on Sundays until 3 in the afternoon.