

Adina Alvo



This is a picture of my mother, Adina Alvo.

My mother was born in 1901 in Thessaloniki. My wife, Mari, says that Adina is a Jewish name. I thought that Adina was more of an Italian name.

Anyway, there were many called Adina in the family, because an aunt called Adina had died.

The first brother of my maternal grandmother, Gattegno, had lost his first wife whose name was Adina, and since then three or four girls that were born were named after her.

My mother went to the Gattegno school I think, or to the Alliance, or both. Maybe she went to the Alliance first and later to the Gattegno. She went to the primary and the secondary school .

She knew very well Ladino, French and Greek. She spoke French very well. She learned Greek by practicing it.

Maybe they did learn some Greek at school. I remember that we always had Greek maids. I think that the fathers trusted very much the Jewish housewives, more than the Christian ones, for their girls to become maids.

They trusted them in the sense that they wouldn't point them to a wrong direction, as we had very strict principles, and that they would treat them fairly.

My maternal grandfather, Saltiel, was a Spanish citizen. My mother was Greek, but she had Spanish citizenship.

When she got married with my father, my father had Greek citizenship, so she also became Greek.

She got married to Simon Alvo around 1921, or 1922. A mutual friend introduced them to each other.

And when he introduced them, a great love developed. They wrote letters to each other for a whole year, although they lived at the same city.

I remember mother having a big bunch of letters wrapped up with a nice ribbon that she would guard at all times, and these were the letters that my father had written to her before they got engaged.

My mother never worked outside the house. But at the beginning, because her mother had died, and before my grandfather got married again, she took care of her two sisters that were younger than her. She brought them up.

My mother loved her husband very much. I think that she loved her husband first and her kids after. Our sister who was the Benjamin, the younger one in the family, was her weakness and this is why she didn't want her to leave with me when I left from Thessaloniki during the war.

My mother had also psychological problems and that's why a couple of times she got depressed. One time they left us at grandmothers' house and my father took her to a sanatorium in Switzerland. They stayed there for about twenty days, so she would recover a little bit.

My mother read in the evening. It was the only time that she could read. Or a friend of hers would come and visit. There was the Germanos family and there were also the relatives. She would go and visit them and they would come and visit us too.

And our sister Lily who also lived near by would come very often. I don't know whether she had friends from school, maybe she did. She would see them every so often.

We were then using the phone only if there was an emergency or something really important, we never used to pick up the phone to have a conversation, ever.

My mother was member of the childrens' asylum. She was also a member of the "Merimna" and "Melissa" Associations. They would come often and collect the subscriptions.

They would also come from the Christian old mens' home, the "Hariseio". An old guy would come by, with a metal box and we would put the money straight in the box. He would come every now and again.

We also contributed at the Matanot Laevionim, which gave meals to the poor. She would go to the distribution very often.

The distributions would take place at Fleming Street, where the Jewish school is today. But there were also distributing further away at the "151" neighbourhood. She never went to the one that was at the Baron Hirsch, because it was very far away from the house.

My mother helped at the serving of the food and the cooking. But that was after we had grown up a bit, after 1936.

When we were younger she didn't have any free time left for this. In fact during the occupation, my mother used to cook and give meals to the children.

From what I have heard, she was a very beautiful woman. As a character she was very shy. She wasn't a snob, she didn't show off, or move about.

My mother was very modest. Modesty is the perfect word to describe her, and she was a very good soul. She was very hospitable. She helped all the girls that were working in the house. We had two girls in the house.

They regarded her as their own mother. She wouldn't let us ask them even for a glass of water.