

Livia Diaconescu And Clara Filderman



This photo was taken in a studio in Focsani, probably in 1934. From right to left: Clara Filderman, my sister, already wearing silk stockings and a young lady's outfit; and I, who still needed to stand on a chair for pictures. I had very curly hair that wouldn't stay straight, no matter how hard my mother tried, so it would be cut very short. I wore a beige dress with a little string and folds, stockings with patterns for children and 'Dermata' leather shoes with buckles (a brand that was en vogue at the time). My sister, Clara, was six years older than me. She was born in Focsani, in 1922. When she was eleven, they realized she had diabetes. After the disease was diagnosed, they took her to the clinic, but an assistant told them to take her to Vienna. In those times, at the beginning of the 1930s, getting a passport wasn't a problem; generally speaking, money wasn't a problem

either. They went to a sanatorium there and the doctors managed, through diet, to bring her to the minimum risk level. They also gave her a book on how she had to be nursed - she had to use scales to portion her food. There was a time when she had to weigh her cherries and, to get another portion, she also added the weight of the pits. My mother cooked specially for her. Clara had to measure her glycosuria twice a day using a solution, she dosed the insulin on her own and injected it in her leg by herself - she did that from the age of eleven to 22. I was born in October 1928, in Focsani. I studied at the Jewish School in the first three grades. I did my homework by myself and I never thought of asking for help. I remember Mrs. Weber, a very good teacher, Mrs. Leslean from Falticeni, and Mrs. Vigder. Towards the end of the school year, I usually caught some contagious disease and could not attend the festivities marking the end of the school year. In the 4th elementary grade, they transferred me to the Romanian school, the School no.1 for girls, which was very close to home. One day, during the break, I was summoned to the entrance gate - my former mates from the Jewish School, Suzy Leibovici and Felicia Marcus, had come to ask me if I wouldn't return there. I didn't go back - even if I had wanted to, the decision had already been made. It was pretty hard at the beginning, but I had a tutor and I caught up fast. I enjoyed everything I studied in the 4th. I was good at math; I liked Romanian and physical education. I had heard there would be some exams at the end of the year and I was terrified because I wondered whether I would remember anything I had learnt. One of my teachers at the School no.1 for girls was Mrs. Popescu. Her husband was the headmaster of the School no.1 for boys; they were very nice people. I had both Jewish and Romanian friends. My mother thought I wasn't old enough to go see my schoolmates, Suzy Leibovici or Felicia Marcus, by myself - they didn't live far from the end of Cotesti Street - and so I made friends with Romanian girls. My mother began to teach me French. Then my sister took care of me. My mother would have me memorize fables by La Fontaine, fragments from Corneille's Cid and Racine's Athalie. She would constantly check on me - there was no escape from that. Before school started, she made me study the history and geography lessons. I felt frustrated then, but now, when I look back, I realize what she did was right.