Mirou-Mairy Angel

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Mairy Angel is a petite woman, 85 years old. In the last decade, due to health problems, she has been living in Athens where her two daughters Lucy and Ellie reside.

Her apartment is full of memories brought from her house in her home town Thessaloniki where she lived all her life.

From the furniture to the serving trays there is a story to be told. Sitting in her armchair, holding the photographs of her family members that perished during the Holocaust, she seemed as if she had been prepared to share her wonderful, as she calls it, prewar life.

On the other hand she was reluctant to share her postwar life but eager to offer her blessings and a warm hug instead.

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- **My family background**

My maiden name was Mirou-Mairy Samuel Karasso. I was born in 1921. I was born prematurely. My mother had typhus. The doctor said he could save either the mother or the child. My father chose the mother. My grandmother Mirou [Karasso, nee Bernadout] took care of me for three months. She placed me in a small doll’s box.

She called the best doctor in town. The doctor said to boil milk and water every day, mix it with sugar and open my mouth and feed me. He also said to wrap my fingers with cotton so they wouldn’t stick to one another. That’s why they called me: ‘Esta es la de los algodones’ [Judeo-Spanish: She who was born prematurely]. I don’t remember my grandmother Mirou. She died a few years after I was born. My mother told me this story.

Then I was released into life. When they took me out of the doll's box something even worse happened to me. They dressed me in light clothes. So I got pneumonia. There were no antibiotics back then. And I died. They called my father to come back from Chalkidiki where he was working. [Chalkidiki: one of the prefectures of Greece located in the southeastern portion of Central Macedonia. It consists of a large peninsula in the northwestern Aegean Sea, resembling a hand with three 'fingers.']

They wrapped me in linen, as it is customary for Jews to do when somebody dies, and waited for the haham [Judeo-Spanish: rabbi] to come to perform the funeral the next day. When the haham came he saw my knee bended. He called everybody to look at my eyes, to see that I was alive.

And I am still alive! How great is the Almighty! My mother gave birth to six children. I was the oldest. From my family only my brother who lives in Israel now [Alberto Karasso] and I survived. Fifty-five thousand Salonica Jews perished. It was G-d's will for me to survive and live up to this day.

My father's father was called Abraham [Alberto Karasso]. He died young leaving his wife and two children, my father [Samuel Abraham Karasso] and his sister [Regina], in great poverty.

My grandmothers, Mirou and Jamila, were sisters. Thus my parents were first cousins. Mirou Karasso was my father's mother. Her family name was Bernadout. I don't know when she was born. When she died I was three years old.

She was the one that saved me and that's why I got her name. She was a widow with two children. So my father from a very young age started working. He didn't have the chance to get educated. He was selling sugar at Egnatia Street [in the center of Thessaloniki] to provide for his family.

In 1917, after the Fire of Thessaloniki 1, he bought land from a Turk. It was a big piece of land where he built our house, the house I was born in. It was a big house with four bedrooms. My grandmother's room was the best one. But she didn't live long enough to enjoy it. My father told me so. And when my brother Alberto was born, he got my grandmother Mirou's room.

Grandmother Mirou was wearing traditional andari 2 clothes. It was not modern at all. She died wearing this outfit just like the Turkish women did. After the war I found in a box my grandmother's wedding dress. My mother had prepared this box and sent it to Nikiti [seaside village on Chalkidiki] during the war. Most of the wedding dress was ruined. I kept what was good and put it in frames now hanging on the walls of my living room.

I don't remember my father's sister's name. I think it was Regina. She was a widow. She had two children, but she visited our house alone. She would come once a week in the morning and leave at night to help my mother. We were many children and there were many things to be done. She was mending the socks.

My father's name was Samuel Abraham Karasso. I cannot tell when exactly he was born. It must have been at the end of the 19th century. My brother should know exactly. He was approximately 60 years old, or a few years older, when he died. He was caught [by the Germans] at the end of 1943.

My father was illiterate. His father died and since he was the only boy in his family he started working from an early age. Thus he didn't have the chance to be educated. But he was a hard working man and became a very successful and wealthy businessman in later years. He had a very big shop on Egnatia Street. It was a food market store.

After the Fire of Thessaloniki he met someone with whom they became business associates. They had shops also at Nikiti and Ormilia [village on Chalkidiki] and several other places in Chalkidiki region. They traded oil, honey, everything that had to do with food. Twenty years my father was in this business! And when my father left [hiding from the Germans] his associate was the one that betrayed him.

I remember better my mother's family. My mother's father was called Simantov Ezrati. He was a jeweler. He made and sold jewelry. He made wedding rings. My granddaughter, too, is making jewelry. But she studied first. Grandfather Simantov had a gambling problem. He was playing cards all day long. I don't remember when Grandfather Simantov died.

My mother's mother was called Jamila or Jema Ezrati, nee Bernadout. Grandmother Jamila's economic status was very good. While her sister Mirou was very poor, she married a wealthy man. This is luck. Her house was near Miaouli Street, in the center of Salonica.
She didn't speak Greek, only Judeo-Spanish 3. Even my mother didn't speak Greek. Not a word!

I remember well Grandmother Jamila. It is Grandmother Mirou that I don't remember at all. Grandmother Jamila was a very beautiful woman. You could see her beauty from her fine skin, her white hair. While Grandmother Mirou was wearing traditional clothes, Grandmother Jamila was always very elegantly dressed.

Grandmother Jamila frequently visited our house. She stayed with us very often. I always wanted her to sleep in my bed with me. I was very selective. I didn't let anyone else, apart from Grandmother Jamila, even sit on my bed. But my mother didn't like me sleeping with an elderly woman, although she was her mother.

Grandmother Jamila always said to my brother and me that when she would die she wanted as a last wish for us to kiss her hand. And we always reassured her that we would do so.

Every year my parents would go to Loutraki [small Greek seaside town near Corinth, famous for its hot springs]. Grandmother Jamila would come to stay with us until our parents returned. She was eating, drinking and sleeping with us. But around 1938 she wasn't able to do so any more. She got sick and didn't come to stay with us any more. So we went visiting her until she died. Grandmother Jamila died in 1940 when the Germans entered Thessaloniki.

My mother had twelve siblings. My grandmother gave birth to Flor, the oldest one, my mother Rachel, the youngest one, and in between to seven boys, Solomon, Maurice, Azriel… The rest I don't remember. Others died, others I don't know anything about.

My mother and grandmother were depressed because of a family problem: Around 1917, my mother's brother Solomon had an affair with a woman. Back then things were not as they are nowadays. Thessaloniki had many 'faubourgo' [Judeo-Spanish: working class areas]. His family didn't want him to marry this woman because she was not of their status. So he left her for a while. But her brother came with a gun and threatened him. So in the end he married her. Nobody from

his family went to the wedding. If my grandfather had still been alive, maybe things would have been different.

I don't remember Solomon's wife. I think Anna was her name. They had four children. I didn't know my cousins either. They were living in an alley in Hirsch 4. I cannot remember very well because whenever I visited them I was unwanted.

Solomon's wife threatened my grandmother that if she ever stayed with them, she would take her revenge for not being wanted in the family. My grandmother's answer was that she had so many children that she wasn't worried where she would go when she would grow older.

However, all of her children except Solomon and my mother went abroad and in the end she had no choice but to go there. Solomon's wife wouldn't let my mother visit her mother. Aunt Anna said that it was prohibited for the rich woman, meaning my mother, to visit.

So my mother sent us, the children. But back then we didn't go out as often as they do nowadays. We stayed at home. I was twenty years old and I was restricted as if I were ten.
I do remember going there. Aunt Anna was sarcastic. She was calling me the rich girl. But during the war food was scarce and Grandmother Jamila needed to be fed. So I went there with food that my mother had prepared for her and I was feeding her.

Grandmother Jamila was worrying because I was so thin. But I was explaining to her that fat women were not in fashion any more. And every time I went there Grandmother Jamila gave me something as a present. Sometimes she gave me her rings. This ring that I am still wearing, my grandmother gave to me.

It used to have a sapphire but I lost it. A few days before Grandmother Jamila died she gave me her diamond ring. I still have the diamond ring, and I will give it to my younger daughter Ellie since my eldest Lucy has her own.

I had an appendicitis operation at the time when Grandmother Jamila died in 1940. I woke up that morning and no one was at home. My father might have gone to work but I found it strange that my mother and brother were not at home. Wondering what was going on, I went out on the balcony.

The Kapon and Levy families were living in our neighborhood and apart from being neighbors we were also friends. Vida Kapon, who survived the Holocaust and whose daughter still lives in Thessaloniki, saw me and asked me why I hadn't gone to my grandmother's funeral.

My father, my mother and my brother had secretly gone to the funeral. I went crazy. I had given my word to my grandmother that I would kiss her hand goodbye when she died. I got dressed very quickly, took the tram, and went there. When my father saw me he explained that he was afraid for my health and this was the reason they didn't tell me about Grandmother's death.

They had not yet buried her. I grabbed her hand and started kissing her hand. I still can feel her cold body at my lips. I had done my duty as I had promised her and this gave me comfort.

My mother's name was Rachel Karasso. I named my daughter Ellie after her. [Editor's note: The name Ellie is derived from the affectionate form of Rachel, Rachellica (little Rachel).] My mother's

family name was Ezrati. She was born in 1900. She was 43 years old when she died.

My mother never described the house she was living in as a child. The only thing I knew was that it was in the Dikitirio area [in the center of Thessaloniki], at Olympou Street. She stayed there until she got married after World War I.

My mother was playing the mandolin. She enjoyed sitting on the balcony, playing the mandolin. But her brothers used to grab her at her hair and take her in the house. It was considered improper for a young woman to sit on the balcony playing the mandolin. She was insubordinate. She wanted to do things in her own way.

She didn't want to marry my father, not only because he was her cousin but also because he was illiterate. She wanted to marry someone of her choice. But her brothers were planning to leave Thessaloniki and go to live abroad. Before leaving, her brother Azriel obliged her to get married to my father despite her will.

After the marriage her siblings left for France. All of her siblings that went to France perished during the Holocaust. My cousins, the children of Azriel, survived. I have contact with them. They came to visit me in Greece. Also, my eldest daughter Lucy keeps contact with them when she visits France.

My mother was 'roja' [Judeo-Spanish: red-haired]. She was a very beautiful redheaded woman. My youngest sister Renica [Rene] looked like my mother. I never saw her with white hair. She didn't have any white hair, just like I don't. I have very few white hairs despite my age. She was always dressed elegantly. She had her clothes made at Olga Boton, a well-known couturier. I remember her as a well-dressed young woman.

Although my mother was very educated, she didn't speak Greek. This was the reason why she was betrayed later on.

She was a capable woman. I didn't know anyone else like her. She managed to take care of six children and the whole house on her own. She was able to have everything prepared by noon. In the afternoon she rested.

My mother was very religious. She kept the Sabbath. She didn't use fire, cook or do any other housework. We had a non-Jewish girl to take care of things. Every Friday my mother polished her nails and had her hair done. There weren't hairdressers for women so she went to the barber's shop on Sygrou Street [in the center of Thessaloniki where Monastirioton Synagogue is located].

My mother always sat in the first women's row at the synagogue. She sat there wearing her stylish clothes and her gold jewelries. Money was not a matter in our family. My parents were rich.

My daughter Lucy reminds my of my mother's character. And now that she is growing older she looks like her with the only difference that my daughter is blond.

- **Growing up**

We were five siblings. I am the oldest. Next is my brother Abraham – Alberto Karasso, born in 1922. He lives in Israel, but his daughter still lives in Thessaloniki. Then came my sister, Jema Samuel

Karasso. Jema was 15 years old when she died. She was much taller than me with beautiful legs. She was a lovable young girl.

My father's friend Franco's brother was in love with her. When he learned that my sister had perished in the Holocaust, he got married to Polimnia and went to live in the United States. But every time he visited Thessaloniki he came to my house asking to see Jema's photographs. And each time I showed him the photographs that I had found after the war, the photographs that my mother had hidden along with other family valuables.

In-between Alberto and Jema there was a girl that died in infancy. The woman that was helping my mother with the housework was carrying the infant in her arms and fell down the stairs. Thus the baby died.

After Jema were Isidor and Rene. Isidor was 13 years old when he died. Rene, or Renica as we called her, because she was youngest one, was only nine years old when she died. All of them had blue eyes.

The life I had at my parents' house was the best part of my whole life. Our residence has a history its own. My father bought a piece of land from a Turk after the Fire of Thessaloniki in 1917, because the Turks were leaving Thessaloniki after 1912 when the Greeks came. Later on, when he got married, he built the house where we lived. After the war my brother found at the Mayor's Office the paper on which it said that my father Samuel Karasso had bought this piece of land.

Our house was one of the best in Thessaloniki. There were nineteen wooden steps leading to a beautiful entrance. We used to count the stairs as a game when we were children. The stairs led to two entrances. One was the entrance that was leading to the living room. This was the main entrance. The other with the big balcony led to the kitchen. When a 'chamalis' [Turkish: hamal; folk expression for delivery service] came to our house bringing things he would enter from this second entrance directly into the kitchen.

Our house had four bedrooms. One room my father built for his mother. My father had been working from a very early age to provide for his family. He saved money and built this house. It had three balconies. One was just in front of the living room. Half of the balcony was covered, so when it rained you could still sit there.

The living room was big. Some of the furniture that I still have today at my home used to be in our living room. These two armchairs that I have in my living room were from my parents' home and, together with a sofa, were the main furniture of our living room. We also had a dinner table with chairs in our living room. The table was stolen, but I still have the chairs in my own living room.

In the living room we had a 'salamandre' [big coal stove] for heating the room. Many Jews had it because it had a cover on the top that opened and they would place the food there to keep it warm during Sabbath. Almost all Jews of Thessaloniki were religious.

Besides the 'salamandre' we had a 'magali' [metallic container in which coal was placed] for heating the house. 'Magali' looked like furniture that opened and you put wood inside. The more wood you put, the more heat it produced. Back then we didn't have central heating.

Our house had two front and two back bedrooms. My room was at the back and it was cold during winter. So I would give a drachma to my youngest brother to go lie on my bed and warm it. My brother was a very naughty boy and every time he was asking for more money. He was nagging that he was stretching his whole body to warm my bed so I could go to sleep in warmth. He was asking for two drachmas.

Isidor and Jema were sharing the same bed. On of them was urinating during the night but they wouldn't tell which one was. Later on Jema had her period so our mother separated them and she found out that it was Isidor who was urinating at night.

There was a long corridor in our house where the bathroom was. The bathtub and the water heater with wood were in a separate room from the toilet. Next to the bathroom and the toilet was a small balcony. There we placed the wood we used for heating during the winter. Then there was the kitchen. Our kitchen was very big. It had a table and a stove.

We had electricity in our home. We had chandeliers that provided a lot of light. The chandeliers that I have in my living room and my bedroom now are from our old house.

On the ground floor was another house that my father was renting out. This house had windows. Three mosaic stairs led to the entrance of this house. This house was rented usually to Jews. Later on we rented to non-Jews, too. I remember my father coming on 'Noches de Shabbat' [Judeo-Spanish: Eve of Sabbath] and greeting the people that were renting the house by saying 'Shabbat Shalom' [Hebrew: Have a good Sabbath; the customary greeting among Jews on Friday and Saturday].

Kaity's Sason mother, has passed away, Sarika was living in this house for two years. Her husband had a small candy factory on Pavlou Mella Street [in the center of Thessaloniki]. They were very good people.

We also had a storehouse at the ground floor. My mother put a variety of things there. We had an iron door outside with a Magen David. Under the Magen David was written 1923, the date the house was built. We were infants when my father built our beautiful house. This is all I know about it.

My mother insisted on teaching us from a very young age the address of our house, which was 33 Olympou Street, and the address of my father's shop, which was 90 Egnatia Street. I remember the nice and gracious way she was telling us again and again these two addresses in a way we could not ever forget. I've got old and this has stayed with me.

Our relations were very good. We grew up with plenty of love and caring. We were all very close to one another. I never heard my parents quarreling. I never heard shouting in our house. Never!

There was a significant age difference between my parents and also they were first cousins. So my father was always doing what my mother wanted. I remember this very clearly. I also remember that every night when my father came home from work at Modiano Market [built in 1923 by the architect Eli Modiano, son of the biggest banker of Salonica, Saul Modiano], he was telling my mother all the news of the day: who came to the shop, what he bought, where he went, whom he saw, who was sending his greeting to her. He counted very much on her opinion in business matters. I thought that this was the natural thing to do.

We were not snobbish, and that although we had one of the best residences of Thessaloniki, with separate bathroom and toilet, which was rare back then. Eighty-five years ago, we were very timid. As children, and later on as young adults, we were not permitted to go out much. Back then it was not as it is nowadays. Today even adolescents are permitted to hang out a lot.

We were a very connected family with close relationships. I remember my father coming back from work at noon and again in the afternoon. At night he would ask me to sit with him for 'usicos' [Judeo-Spanish: rare expression for appetizers combined with ouzo (aperitif like Pernod)].

He would have a bite of food and then he would tell me that I had to eat, too, since I was drinking. This was his way to make me eat. Although I was the eldest, I didn't have much appetite, while my siblings would consume whatever food was given to them. Sitting every night with my father I learned how to drink ouzo. I never drank anything else but ouzo in my life. And in spite of my age I still like it.

My eldest brother and I were always very obedient. Only my youngest brother, Isidoricos, was disobedient. My mother would show him the heels of her slippers as a threat. She never hit us. She would hit with the heel of her slipper at the window instead, thus breaking it. Then she would go to our neighbor Sofia Govatzidaki, who had a telephone, in order to call our father and tell him to send somebody to repair the broken window.

We spoke a mix of Spanish and French in our house. It was a mixed language. Everybody in Thessaloniki was speaking this language. We were not the only ones. My mother [like many Jews of Thessaloniki] didn't know Greek at all, not even a word. This was the reason that many were betrayed [during the German Occupation].

In our house lived a girl who was helping my mother with the housework. She was a Greek Christian from Chalkidiki. Her family was very poor and they gave her to my father to feed her. I think her name was Maria. She was the one that learned Spanish to communicate with my mother. She was the one switching on the light on Sabbath.

Every Sunday my mother would take her to Saint Mina's Church so she could observe her own religious customs. Occasionally I went along with them. I would light a candle in the church. It does not matter to me which religion is yours and which is mine.

Every Monday Mrs. Eleni would come to help with the laundry. My mother had a big pot where they would put 'alisiva' [or aleshiva: detergent made with ashes mixed with water] and wash the clothes. We were so many people living in this house: my parents, five siblings and the girl helping with the housework. But my mother was very competent.

On Mondays my father's sister came, too. She was helping with sewing socks. She would stay with us until late at night. I don't remember other relatives apart from my father's sister, Aunt Regina, and my mother's brother, Uncle Solomon. The rest of my mother's siblings had gone to France.

We had many good neighbors. First of all was the Kapon family. It was a big family, they all lived in our neighborhood, and I knew them all. Bella Kapon, Lina Kapon and her sister Aliki, who has already died. Also Giannakis, then called Bino Kapon. We called him Benico because he was the youngest. I also knew Veta Kapon, who was married and had a child.

Nearby lived Mimi Rousso, Betty's Ferera father. He had a house in an alley close to our house. Our house was on the main road because by chance it happened so. I also knew Buena Franco before the war. Her father and my father were close friends from a very young age. Mrs. Rene Frances, nee Saltiel, also lived close by.

We used to play tombola [group card game usually played by children] together. Now her name is Rene Arditi, mother of Sakis and Rita Arditi. She was single then. She had Spanish nationality. During the war she was sent to a forced labor camp.

We had Christian friends, too. They loved us a lot. We had a very close relationship with the Govatzidaki and Manias families. On St. Nicholas' Day my mother would go with the best presents to visit Niko Mania and congratulate him on his name day. Our Christian friends would visit our house on 'Roshana' [Judeo-Spanish: Rosh Hashanah]. Since we Jews didn't have name days, they would come on this particular day to wish us all the best for our New Year. My mother would prepare a big feast to welcome them.

We didn't have problems with our Christian friends and neighbors as far as I can remember. There were many Christian girls in school, too. They loved us.

I remember that from our part we were proper, too. At Easter, when the Epitaph procession was passing in front of our house at five o'clock in the afternoon we would go out to watch it. In addition, I would take the girl we had at home to Saint Mina's Church.

During the Christian Easter week some were yelling that Jews killed Christ. But there was no problem. Nobody harmed us. They couldn't recognize us. We, the younger ones, were talking Greek in order to be able to go out at this age. We could not hide or talk French or Judeo-Spanish.

The problems we had were our own fault. Many spoke Judeo-Spanish only and not Greek and that was wrong.

There was no anti-Semitism. Only very few were anti-Semites, the 3E 5, which, although I was young, I remember. They set a whole Jewish neighborhood on fire 6. They were Venizelo's organization and very much against Jews.

My childhood years were wonderful. I cannot remember the pre-school period. I cannot remember my first day at school. I wasn't born 'properly.' My mother would wake up early in the morning and go straight to the kitchen. There we had a very big table and heating. She would prepare for us milk, cocoa or 'salepi' 7, as it was customary back then, and slices of bread with marmalade. We were so many kids to get prepared to go to school.

- **My school years**

There were many Jewish schools in Thessaloniki. Although my father was rich, my mother didn't want to send us there because they were far from home. We went to the French Missionary School. And my father was wondering all the time why my mother preferred the French School.

He was worried that I might become a nun because I never wanted to dress up nicely. I was always dressed like a nun. There was also a case of a Jewish girl that became a nun. She was in our school. This worried my father.

I cannot remember my school's address. It was near the Stock Market. We crossed Sygrou Street and turned to Egnatia Street. There the tram was passing and my mother was much afraid of this conjunction. From the window of our house my mother could see us at Sygrou Street coming back from school. This was the reason she wanted us to go to a nearby school.

We were escorted when going to school. There was one girl, a 'Judia' [Judeo-Spanish: Jewish woman], a little older than us and she proposed to escort us to school each morning. We were going to the same school. My mother agreed for my eldest brother Alberto and me, but not for the younger ones.

We returned from school escorted by the girl that was living with us, helping my mother with the housework. As we came back from school we would stop and buy one fresh tasty 'coulouri' 8 with our pocket money and then return home.

I will never forget: as we entered the door my mother was already waiting for us with the 'mistraba' [or mastraba: Turkish and Judeo-Spanish: tin cup] of milk, and a semi-boiled egg to drink it with the milk right in front of the door. She would see us coming from Sygrou Street and she was waiting for us just behind the entrance door. Oh, God, how disgusting this was! This was the reason I hated coming back from school. And then, after we entered the house, she gave us a big slice of cake.

In the afternoon a teacher would come to teach my eldest brother Alberto and me Greek. In 1912 the Greeks entered Salonica and we had to learn Greek. Most of the Greek history I know is what I learned from when my children went to school. Until then I didn't know much about Greek history.

My school years are unforgettable. We went to a very good school. The classrooms were very big. We weren't many children in each class, no more than fifteen. My brother Alberto went to Saint Jean Baptiste de la Salle 9, which was only for boys. I went to Saint Vincent de Paul 10, which was only for girls.

They didn't allow us to speak a single word of Greek or Judeo-Spanish. If we did so, they lowered our grade. 'Conduite neuf, conduite dix' [French: grade for behavior nine, grade for behavior ten]. It went up to 'quinze' [French: fifteen]. So at 'récréation' [French: school break] we were speaking only French because they would lower our behavior grade otherwise. Back then things were different. When my daughters, Lucy and Ellie, went to French Missionary School, many things had changed. Even the teachers were different.

A law was issued saying that students of Greek nationality where not allowed to go to an elementary school of another nationality. So all of my siblings and I were expelled from the schools we went to and were transferred to other schools for one year. We had to finish elementary school first, then go back to our previous schools.

I was transferred to Alchech School 11, one of the best Jewish schools in Thessaloniki, for one year to finish elementary school and then continue at a gymnasium 12 of my choice. The lessons were in Hebrew and French. My younger siblings went to Pinto School 13. One of my father's employees was escorting us to the school.

I developed psychological problems. I wasn't paying attention in the classroom, I wasn't studying, I wasn't eating. All day long I was crying. Within six months I became a skeleton. My mother was very afraid of my health. So she went to 'ma mère' [French: the highest nun in hierarchy] of my

previous school.

She said that she was not interested in the graduation diploma. She was just interested in my well-being. She begged her to take me back. And they did so and took both my eldest brother Alberto and me back. Until now I keep my school at a very special place in my heart. I have only good memories of kindness and happiness from my school.

We didn't have teachers at Saint Vincent de Paul. We had only nuns. And I loved them all. But the dearest of all was 'soeur' [French: Sister] Odile. She was very pretty. There was a rumor among the girls of my age that she had a love affair that didn't end up well and thus she became a nun.

I was a very good student. My grades were always 'très bien.' I liked very much 'Histoire de la France' [French: History of France]. I didn't like Science, Physics at all. My mind couldn't grasp it.

We were wearing a black uniform with the emblem of our school. We were also wearing a blue beret in winter and a white one in the summer.

During prayer hour we were standing there. 'Au nom du Père et du Fils et du St. Esprit…' [French: In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost…] they were saying while making the sign of the Cross. At the religion lesson we were staying in the classroom during the period that the Old Testament was taught.

When they reached the chapters of the New Testament 'las Judias' [Judeo-Spanish: the Jewish women] left the classroom except the days that it was raining. Other times we stayed because we didn't want to insult them. But we didn't take grades for this lesson. Most of my schoolmates were Jews, and very few Christian.

When there was a Jewish holiday we didn't go to school. The nuns knew the Jewish holidays and they did not consider us 'absente.' 'Absente jamais de la vie.' [French: Absent, never ever.] The nuns loved us very much. I remember my brother Isidor taking the cross that the nuns had and kissing it. And I told my father about this. But my father was afraid of me becoming a nun, not for my brother.

I remember something else. If the nuns learned that we were sick, they would come to visit us at home, to talk with us, to bring us books. There is no comparison with the nuns of the school that my daughters went to.

In the afternoons we weren't doing much. We were doing our homework. At four o'clock a teacher would come to teach us Greek.

I was an 'abonnée' [French: subscriber] at our school library. I was taking books to read at home. 'L' histoires d'amour' [French: love stories]. 'L' histoires d'amour but non pas très d'amour. Ce n'est pas permit pour les soeurs.' [French: It was not permitted to the nuns to show too much affection.]

My father thought that reading caused me to be weak. I was going to the bathroom, taking a book with me. Once my father found out and threw the book over the balcony. My mother was trying to explain to him that books weren't the reason for my bad appetite and that he ought to let me read.

My mother was reading books, too, when she was young. In the fire, before World War I, her house burned down and she had no books to read any more. When she got married she didn't have any more time to read. But she was still reading the newspaper L' Indépendant 14 in French. I was not reading newspapers; I was only reading books. This was my preference and still is.

Our Jewish education was our mother's responsibility. My father knew only the Kiddush. He was illiterate but my mother knew almost everything. My mother taught us about the holidays, Roshana, Kippur, and Pesach. She was reading the Haggadah.

She was teaching my eldest brother Alberto and me from Purim until Pesach how to read the Haggadah. Our Haggadah was in Judeo-Spanish, not in Hebrew. I didn't know Hebrew. I never learned it. So many times I went to Israel and I didn't learn even a word!

We were attending the Monastirioton Synagogue 15. Sygrou Street was full of Jews. My mother and Aruesti 16 were very dear friends. When they were building this synagogue, Aruesti because she was ill, asked my mother to supervise the workers and watch the 'arabades' [Turkish: two or four-wheel carriage used for the transportation of people or goods.]

She was standing there counting what they did. They made the best Cal [Hebrew: Kahal: flock or synagogue] of Thessaloniki. It was built all with marble. At the entrance there was a big stair made with marble leading upstairs to the women's section. My mother's seat was in the first row because she had helped at the construction of the synagogue. This synagogue still exists because the Red Cross used it during the German occupation.

I remember the synagogue's tevah the day my eldest brother Alberto had his bar mitzvah. In the morning he sang at the Cal. All the monks, the 'frères' from his school Saint Jean Baptiste de la Salle came. His fellow boy scouts also came because he was in a boy scouts team. Then we had a reception at our house.

The tables were set from the living room to the balcony. It was in September. The year I don't remember. For one whole week my mother had 'mosos de boda' to help prepare pies for the reception. [Mosos de boda: Judeo-Spanish term for young men to serve as helping hands, occasionally in the preparation of an event.] In the afternoon we had a reception again. My parents' friends came with their children. We were dancing all night long.

That night my father's associate told him that he had spent so much money for just a feast for his son. My mother, who didn't trust him in the first place, heard what he said. Then she said to my father that although he was the first to come to congratulate them, he had also said spoken ill of them.

My other brother Isidor's bar mitzvah was when we were in the ghetto 17. On Thursday all men went to the synagogue and that was all. A few days later they left for Auschwitz.

The only thing I can remember was Isidor's brit milah. I was going in between people in order to go up front to see what they were doing to my brother. And when I saw cutting and blood I fainted. One of my father's friends grabbed me and took me to another room. I remember this because it took me a long time to recover. Everything was done at home back then. There weren't hospitals and clinics. The births were done at home, too. We had Doctor Matalon, the gynecologist come over.

On Sabbath we didn't go to school. On 'Noches de Shabbat' we would go bring oil to the synagogue. [Editor's note: Sephardim pour oil in a big bowl standing in front of the tevah. There is a wick in the middle of the bowl which is lit and its light is preserved by adding oil.]

This was the most important. Every Friday my mother would give me a big glass of oil to go to the Cal. She was saying to me 'Mairy, please, mucho regalada mia, tu sos fija mia, regalada [Judeo-Spanish: 'My everything, my beloved one, my daughter, my beloved one'], go and put oil and say: 'Salu buena a papa, salu buena a mama, salu buena para todos los fijos, y el Dio que te de ganas para comer.' [Judeo-Spanish: Good health to the father, good health to the mother, good health to all the children, and may God give you appetite to eat.] As for the latter, 'Esto no te lo vo disir,' [Judeo-Spanish: 'This, I will not say'] was my answer.

I always had poor appetite. My mother kept asking me why I was torturing her. They gave me injections because I wasn't eating. And my father, whose darling I was, was worried. But men went to work all day long. It was my mother that had to deal with my feeding and she was suffering because of me.

Then we came back from the synagogue, dressed in our best clothes and sat down at the table. If we had 'mousafiris' [Turkish: misafir: guest] he sat with us. On Sabbath, but also at every other dinner, my father wanted all the family seated around the table.

Usually he would come a little bit earlier, and he drank ouzo first. He would ask me to sit with him and drink. Only me he wanted to share him company, nobody else. My mother prepared for him 'usicos.' We very much liked 'wuevesicos en haminados' [Sephardic recipe of preparing hard boiled eggs; baked eggs in onion leaves]. My mother would also prepare bread with caviar, baked bread with cheese, 'kefticas de patata' [Judeo-Spanish: meatballs with potato]. I remember tasting them all. My father was insisting that, since I was drinking ouzo, I had to eat something.

We placed a big candle on the table. My father would recite the Kiddush. We all ate nicely together. The first classical plate for 'Noches de Shabbat' was fried mullet fish. Then we ate whatever my mother had cooked. My mother was an excellent cook. She made okras, peas and 'kefticas de pouero' [Judeo-Spanish: meatballs with leek], which I liked very much. Later on I cooked them, too. She cut the leek and boiled it. Then she smashed it in the 'machina.'

Because we didn't had mixer back then, my mother had a machine to cut the meat. Then she squeezed the leek very hard to dry and added the chopped meat and eggs and fried it. They were delicious. I ate one or two. The others ate many. Everybody ate a lot; I was the only one who caused difficulties when it came to food.

My younger brother, Isidor, on Saturday morning, when he woke up, wanted to eat beans. We usually had beans on Friday for lunch, but he was asking for them on Saturday morning. Usually on Saturday morning we ate 'pasteliko,' pie with spinach and cheese, and cake. My mother made a lot of cakes.

The Sabbath sweet was 'tupishti' [also called 'pispiti' by Romaniotes: a kind of cake with almonds or nuts usually with syrup]. My oldest brother Alberto liked it very much. So my mother made a portion especially for him. He was sleeping in the room that Nona [Grandmother] Mirou used to sleep in.

My mother was putting Alberto's portion of 'tupishti' in his room, on the bedside table that used to belong to Nona Mirou. Isidor secretly went to the drawer taking his eldest brother's pieces. When Alberto didn't find his sweet on his drawer he would ask my mother where it had gone.

Then my mother would tell Isidor: 'A Dio Isidor [Judeo-Spanish: Oh my God, Isidor] you ate it fijo' [Judeo-Spanish: son]. Then Isidor was complaining that he could have 'tupishti' only on Sabbath while his brother had it for the whole week.

On Sabbath day my mother met up with friends. Either they would come to our house or my mother would go to theirs. I spent the day reading. On Saturday night, after Sabbath, I would go to Alcazar Cinema with my friends. The cinema owners were Jews.

Roshana is the first day of the Jewish year. As I mentioned before, we Jews didn't have name days for our Christian friends to come and visit us. Thus they would come on this day to honor us. My mother did many preparations for this day. They would wash the curtains and put the carpets in the living room.

Then they polished the 'tradico' [Judeo-Spanish: small tray for serving sweets] where they put the sweets they offered to the guests. Usually they served apple sweets. We would eat a spoon of apple sweets and say 'Aniada Buena' [Judeo-Spanish equivalent of Happy New Year].

On Roshana it was customary to make pies. I remember my mother making leaves of the dough. They were so big and many that she would place them on the backing sheets. Then she cut them and made 'rodanchicas' [Judeo-Spanish: small round pies usually made for Rosh Hashanah] and 'pastelicos.' She made 'rodanchicas de calabasa' [Judeo-Spanish: small round pies made with yellow marrow], spinach pies and 'kefticas de pouero.' Our Christian friends liked them all very much. They would even come to the kitchen to taste them before we formally served them.

We didn't confront anti-Semitism. We considered Thessaloniki as our homeland. More than 55.000 Jews were living there.

During Roshana we visited our Jewish friends and neighbors, the Kapon families, Buena, and others. We were very interrelated. On Roshana we would go to the synagogue. It was very nice. On the upper level were the women. I remember my mother, always elegantly dressed, sitting in the first row.

On Kippur we were fasting. We ate at night then we began fasting. In the morning I would visit my friends or they would visit me. My mother would say to me that I could have a glass of milk without my friends seeing me. I would answer that I was not fasting for my friends on Kippur.

On Kippur we would go to the synagogue. First of all I would go in the evening, before I started fasting, with the glass of oil like on Fridays. I had to go before five o'clock. My mother was staying at the synagogue all day on Kippur. We would all go dressed nicely. Back then the children had learned to remain seated in the synagogue very quietly.

The custom to go to the synagogue with the glass of oil on the eve of Kippur I also observed later on in my life. I would go with my daughters, Lucy and Ellie, nicely dressed. My friends would ask me why I was going with the glass of oil and I would answer that this was a tradition I kept to remind me of my mother. It was impossible for me to go to the synagogue on Kippur eve without

the glass of oil.

We used to end the Kippur fast with a spoon of orange sweet. Then we would eat chicken soup with lemon, which I was cooking, too, later on in my life. Then we would eat whatever my mother had prepared. Usually it was okras, which were easily digested after a whole day of fasting.

Then my father would go to a pastry shop and bring sweets home. Usually he brought ‘baisedes’ [sweets made with the white part of the egg and sugar; it looks like a white biscuit] or whatever else he would find. There were many Jewish pastry shops in Thessaloniki back then.

Sukkot was not very important. We had a sukkah. My mother would cover the veranda with bed sheets and decorate it. My mother was very religious. Only when it was raining it was difficult with the bed sheets. We were sitting and eating there.

On Purim we exchanged gifts. My mother would prepare plates with various sweets wrapped very nicely. She would tell us where to go with each plate. And we returned with plates from those we visited. Before the war we were going back and forth exchanging visits and plates with ‘Judias’ friends. We were very close to one another back then. My brother often complained of being tired going from one house to the other.

On Purim we had ‘novias’ [Judeo-Spanish: brides; big caramels representing various figures, mostly brides or grooms; traditionally made for Purim]. It was a candy-like lollipop. We would buy them from someone who specialized in making them. They were made in various shapes. We would offer ‘novias grooms’ to unmarried girls to find a husband soon, ‘novias baby boys’ to pregnant women, ‘novias knives’ to learn to cut your dowry and so on.

I don’t remember going to the synagogue on Purim. There were organized luxurious dancing nights where they would go formally dressed. I didn’t have the chance to go because I was too young.

Pesach was the nicest of all holidays. The house was wonderful. The preparations would start one month ahead. First they started by cleaning the house, the curtains and, especially meticulously, the kitchen since all the cooking was done there. They whitewashed the kitchen. Then they would polish all the tins and boxes and placed them on the ‘cheminée’ [French: fireplace] again. They were made from aluminum and I still have some of them to remind me of my mother.

Then we had pascual 18 ‘tentzeredia’ [tenzteres in plural; Turkish: tencere: folk expression for the kitchen utensils]: pots, casseroles, plates, knifes, forks, spoons, everything. They were kept in a separate box at the warehouse. Then the non-pascual were placed separately in another box at the warehouse.

We bought the ‘massa’ [Judeo-Spanish: matzah] from the ‘fabrica de la matzah’ [Judeo-Spanish: factory producing matzah] at an alley near Carolou Dil Street [in the center of Thessaloniki near Modiano Market]. They made two types of ‘massa.’

The premium one, which was thinner and whiter, and the regular one, usually bought by the poor Jews living in ‘faubourga.’ My father would go there with a big wooden box we had especially for ‘massa’ and bought it. They would place it in the box wrapped in a clean bed sheet.

The lamb was the most important. It was kosher of course. At Modiano Market there were many Jewish butchers. That's why many envied us. The 'chamalis' would bring the meat and the fish from the market to our house. The fish was cooked 'peche en salsa' [Judeo-Spanish: sweet water fish with sauce cooked in sour prunes] with vinegar. I didn't eat it because I didn't like it.

On Pesach everything was prepared at home. They prepared a lot of things. First they made 'charoset' [sweet, dark-colored, lumpy paste made of fruits and nuts]. Then they did 'masicas' [Judeo-Spanish: small matzot] and 'masicas de vino' [Judeo-Spanish: biscuits made with matzah]. 'Masicas de vino' my mother made especially for me because I liked it very much since it didn't contain a lot of sugar. Sweets I do not like. They also prepared 'biselicas' [Judeo-Spanish: peas], 'prunas' [Judeo-Spanish: prunes], 'kefticas de pouero,' 'mousaka' with onions, and alichugitas [Judeo-Spanish: stuffed lettuce] with lamb.

Then they made bumuelos 19. They would smash the 'massa,' add many eggs and milk and fry them. We had a special casserole with seven semi-rounds at the bottom. They placed the mixture in the seven semi-rounds and when they were fried they placed them on a plate and served them with honey on top. I never helped my mother with the cooking.

Every Pesach we would all sit at the table and read the Haggadah. First my father would recite the Kiddush with pascual wine. This wine was made in Thessaloniki. There were two people that had a factory that made kosher wine. We were almost 57,000 Jews in Thessaloniki. All the market was Jewish. I knew one of the owners but cannot recall his name. For Pesach they gave us pascual wine. They brought it home.

We all read the Haggadah, first my father, then my brother Alberto, my mother and I. From Purim our mother would teach us the reading of the Haggadah. It was a simple book without drawings in Judeo-Spanish language. We were singing: 'Este pan dela afriyssion que cumieron nuestros Padres en Tierra de Ayifto...' [Judeo-Spanish: This bread of unhappiness that our fathers ate in the land of Egypt.]

I also remember the Ten Plagues that my father was throwing in a bowl and we were turning our heads the other way so we could not look. Then my mother would throw away the content of the bowl. [Editor's note: This is a traditional Jewish custom in Greece.] We would read the story of how we passed through the Dead Sea. We were reading everything.

We had a big plate in the middle of the table. Whenever something was mentioned one, usually my father, would raise it for everybody to see it. I remember everything: 'las tres masas escondidas' [the three hidden matzot], 'el wuessesico de carne' [the bone of the lamb's leg]. Then we had the 'bucados' [snacks] with 'massa' and 'charoset' as was customary among Jews. We had to read up to the end of the Haggadah before eating, although we were very satisfied with the various 'bucados.'

When the reading of the Haggadah ended we would bring to the table a variety of dishes for dinner. First we had 'massa amojada' [wet matzah], wet and wrapped in a napkin. I liked it better this way because it was soft, not dry. Others ate it dry. Then we would eat fish, peas, and lamb. We ate very many things. Then we had pastry made with matzah. After having pastries we sang.

Our living room was big and on Pesach we would set a long table and whoever was alone was invited to our home. Also the neighbors from downstairs would come upstairs to our place and we would all celebrate together. Then they would say goodbye: ‘Toda Raba’ [Hebrew: Thank you].

The first morning of Pesach it was customary to have ‘bumuelos’ for breakfast. My mother would yell: ‘Come ‘fijicas’ [young girls], come ‘regaladas’ [my beloved], come to eat ‘bumuelicos frescos’ [fresh bumuelos].’

Pesach was the nicest holiday. It was the most joyful one. We didn’t go to the Cal except to take oil there. Pesach was a home-oriented holiday. On the first and the second day the dinner was very formal. Then we had three days and then the last two dinners. Eight days in total.

The first day my mother’s brother would come to visit her. It was customary to visit people in the neighborhoods and friends during the eight days of Pesach. It was the Easter Week for Christians, too. The nuns from our schools would come to wish us all the best for Pesach. That’s why I have kept them in my heart.

On the last evening we would go to a nearby field and take some sand. Then, at every corner we passed by we would place some sand. This was a custom we had. Everybody was doing it.

Then our father would take us out for dinner. He would rent a ‘paitonaki’ [landau, carriage with horses] to take us to a Jewish tavern where the cooking was kosher. Our father couldn’t take us somewhere non-kosher. And this is how Pesach ended.

My pre-war life in Thessaloniki was like a fairy-tale. These were the best years of my life. Life at my parent’s home was wonderful. I never heard disputes. We were close to each other without egoism. Despite my age, my brain still works perfectly and I remember everything very clearly.

Back then everything was different. First of all there was this age issue: although we were 20 years old we were constrained. We couldn’t wander around. I cannot say about others, but I was sitting at home like an idiot, always at home with my parents. My life was restricted. My friends in the neighborhood were restricted, too.

Our neighbors were good people. We were going out and played with Alingou and Hadjinikolaou, whose grandson Nikos [Hadjinikolaou: famous Greek TV news journalist] is working at Alpha [private TV Channel in Greece]. We were playing ‘tsilikia’ [street game played with two wooden sticks], war and peace and who was running faster. I was the fastest of all. Nobody could beat me. Even today, after a leg operation I had, I don’t have problems walking.

I had many friends, Christian, too. Christians helped us a lot. My father would give me pocket money every week and every Thursday I would go to Alcazar Cinema. It was only us girls that went to the cinema. With boys we were just playing in the neighborhood.

My mother insisted that I don’t wander around far from our house. I was only going out with my brother Alberto, holding his hand. But I remember once something very rare happened. My brother was ill and didn’t go to school. As I was leaving school to return back home, my schoolmate Beatrice proposed that I should go with her to her house.

She reassured me that she was living nearby. I was always naïve, thus I followed her. When we arrived at her house she went upstairs. I believe she lived in the Vardaris 20 Jewish neighborhood. I wasn't sure where I was since I didn't go out often.

Night started falling and it was getting darker and darker. Beatrice was not coming down. I started wandering around crying. I saw women with naked breasts and legs. I lost my mind. This area was called 'La callegea de las negras' [the street alley of the prostitutes].

They were Jewish women that went to bed with men for money. But they helped me. I was a tiny girl crying. A 'Judia' woman came up to me and asked me why I was crying. I explained that I was lost, that I didn't know where I was. She took me to the central road were there was a policeman.

The policeman asked me where I lived. And it came automatically out of my mouth: the home address that my mother used to teach us. The policeman told me not to cry any more since he was going to take me back home.

It was dark by now. I usually returned from school at 4pm. My mother went crazy. My father was crying. They were wondering what had happened to me. My mother was crying as she thought they had lost me. When the policeman brought me home my father took him in to give him a treat. As for me, this was the first time that my father hit me. This is all I can remember about this incident.

Thessaloniki was beautiful. We were connected to one another in this town. We were more than 57,000 Thessaloniki Jews but we also had many Christian friends. We loved our hometown. The Jewish Community of Thessaloniki was one the richest in Europe. My father was paying 'pecha' [Hebrew: communal tax] to the community. Only my father was involved in community matters. Women weren't involved in such things back then.

Women didn't even go to the market. My father would go to Modiano Market every Thursday to buy meat and fish and 'chamalis' would bring them home. The milkman brought milk to the house. My mother would buy the vegetables. The traveling vegetable seller was passing outside our house shouting: 'Zarzavaji [ambulant vegetable merchant] Rashelica zarzavaji, come down…' My mother would go to buy spinach, leek, whatever vegetables she needed.

One of the things that my mother insisted on teaching us was how she would clean the chicken before cooking it. It was like going to school: here is the stomach, the intestine that goes to the stomach, here is the liver, and here is the bile. Then she would put it in the sink with salt for one hour to dry out all blood. Then she would rinse it with water seven times. The meat she would then cook in salsa [sauce]. She would make the mincemeat separately using the 'machina.'

More than half of Thessaloniki's inhabitants were Jews. The best marketplace was Jewish and on Sabbath it was closed. Most of the Jewish shops were closed on Sabbath. That's why some envied us. The wholesale market was at Emporiou Square.

All the wholesalers were Jews. One of them was Franco. He had a factory producing 'halva' [sweet made with sesame paste and sugar] and 'matzounia' [soft lollypop-s jellies]. He also had a bus with a sign 'Sweets and Matzounia.' He was selling his products all over Greece. Later on his business went down.

I remember my sister Jema, during the German Occupation, was asking for ‘halva.’ My father would ask his friend Franco to give him some for his daughter. Franco’s brother was in love with my sister Jema. When he came back from Auschwitz and saw that my sister had not returned, he married Polimnia, who was Christian, and they went to the United States. They were economically ruined as most of the Jews were after the war. The first time he came visiting Greece he asked me to show him Jema’s photographs. So I did, and he started crying.

The only wholesaler at Emporiou Square that was not Jewish was Hadjinikolaou. His family and ours were close.

We, as children, never went to the market. There was nothing else beyond Sygrou Street and 33 Olympou Street. We just went to the market twice a year to buy shoes on Rosh Hashanah and Pesach. My mother would have us seated one next to the other in the shop and let us try shoes, one by one. The owner of the shoe shop was Christian. But he knew Judeo-Spanish so well that there was no problem communicating with my mother, who didn’t speak Greek at all.

We had a couturier that was sewing Mairy’s, Jema’s and Renica’s clothes. We were always very well dressed. I was usually reluctant wearing new things. My mother would buy the textiles for our clothes from Cohen at Egnatia Street. Cohen was a Jew.

We would go out only with my father to the movies or to a restaurant. My father insisted on going to eat first, and if I ate we would go to the cinema. I went along with his proposal. We were at the movies, at Titania Cinema, when the war was declared.

Every summer we went on vacation to Chalkidiki for two months. My father had a business associate at Nikiti and he was renting us a house. It was a small house. All the children would sleep together in one room. The house was near the sea. My eldest brother Alberto would arrange for a small boat.

Once I remember that suddenly Vardaris [northern wind stemming from the river Axios or Vardaris] started blowing. My brother couldn’t manage the boat. We were screaming for help until somebody heard us and came to rescue us. Despite my age I can still remember details as this one. Even though my body is damaged, my mind still works well.

Every year my parents would go to Loutraki to drink water from the Karandani spring [an area near Loutraki, in Corinthos, famous for its hot springs and mineral water.] They both had liver problems and the doctor suggested going there once a year. They usually took my youngest siblings, Isidor and Renica, with them. In 1940 they proposed to take me along. My father loved me very much and he wanted me to see the beauties of the countryside. We went at the beginning of September. The war was declared a few days after our return to Thessaloniki.

- **During the war**

I was with my parents at the movies. The next day, on 28th October, the war was declared. Then our Golgotha started. The first bomb fell at my school. It closed and we never went back to school. When in 1940 the war was declared, I still needed two more years to take my degree. Thus I have neither ‘Bacheau’ [French elementary school diploma] nor ‘Baccalaureate’ [French high school diploma].

When the Alvanico War 21 ended, the Germans came to Thessaloniki. This was the beginning of the end. The Germans marched into Thessaloniki in 1941, in 1942 they gathered us and in 1943 they restricted us. And that was it.

The day that the Germans marched into Thessaloniki my father took one of his employees and came to the house to remove the Magen David from the front door of our house. He also erased with lime the inscription '1922,' commemorating the year in which our house was built.

My father changed his profession. He didn't want to have anything to do with the food market so he became a metal merchant. The merchandise of the shop was divided in two; half belonged to my father and half to his associate. We took the clothes out of the cupboards and staffed them with rice, pasta, oil, and honey.

During the German occupation we didn't have a food problem. Every night we sat all together at the table and ate from what we had. I sat there, without appetite, playing with the food on my plate first and then ate a bite or two, while others were dying from starvation.

The government was distributing yellow bread called 'bobota' [bread made of corn]. The girl we had at home collected our portion at the bakery and then she gave it to the poor. We had white flour that farmers from the villages were giving to my father. Thus we made white bread at home.

There was a factory just opposite our house. The refugees were gathered there. Every day they were carrying out with 'arabades' the dead. Each morning, as soon as I got up, I went to the window to count how many had died. My father was worried because after this I wouldn't eat.

I remember that many of the poor Jews living at 'fabourgo' were dying. The Jewish Community of Thessaloniki asked my father to take home a small girl to feed. My father agreed. I cannot remember her name. She was five years old. When she came my mother found out that she had lice.

So she told her to go back to her mother and stay there until she had no more lice. Then she'd be welcome to come back. My mother did this because she was afraid that we would get lice, too. She came back a week later. She stayed overnight. We had space for her to sleep. All day long she was singing.

My mother told me how with the 'koussouria' [from the Turkish 'koussur': leftovers] she was eating she became unrecognizable. She put on weight and her cheeks got red. My mother cursed me to have a child that would torture me with food as much as I tortured her.

My daughter Ellie would fall asleep with a bite of food in her mouth. I was the eldest and 'mi mou aptou' [Greek: very sensitive]. This girl would sit at my feet and call me mademoiselle. But I resisted such special treatment and insisted that she sat next to me and call me Mairy. All my life I preferred simplicity. When the time came that we had to leave our house to go into hiding, she insisted to come with us. She was screaming when her mother came to pick her up from our house.

We were put in ghettos. The border of our ghetto was Egnatia Street. We we were not allowed to go beyond that. The rabbi came to the Kehila [Hebrew: synagogue] and told us that a law was issued by the community that we had to wear a yellow star. All the Jews had to wear it in order to be distinguished from others. But for me there was no yellow star. I took it off and went wherever I

wanted.

Our house was located in the Kehila de los Monastirlis 22 ghetto because it happened that our house was there. If we had been living in another area we would have needed to wander around to find somewhere to live. But this way we could stay in our house until the end. Because our house was in the ghetto, one room was confiscated: a couple that had no place to stay came to live with us. Their house was situated near Aghia Sophia [Church, a replica of St. Sophia of Constantinople].

The rabbi [of Thessaloniki] was responsible for what happened. He came to Cal Monastirlis and told us that there was nothing to worry about. He advised us to give all our assets to the Germans and go work for them. He lied to us.

From then on our father restricted us. We could not leave the house. I never saw the 'defile' [French: procession] going to Baron Hirsch. Our father wouldn't let us, especially me because I was very sentimental. But I remember something else: Once a rabbi came to our synagogue. The Germans cut his beard and beat him.

There were people that helped us. I remember Christian women crying because the Jews were deported. I have a friend now, her name is Sevasti. She told me that back then she told her mother to go and buy from the Jews that were leaving because they were selling their assets for a piece of bread. Her mother answered, crying that she didn't want to acquire things this way. Also, Archbishop Damascinos went to Merten and told him to take him and send him to Auschwitz.

[Editor's note: Dr. Max Merten was the Wehrmacht's officer in charge of the city of Thessaloniki from 1941 to 1943. After the war in 1957 he came to Greece on a visit and was caught by the Greek authorities. In 1959 he was tried as a war criminal in Athens and was incarcerated but soon after a Greek presidential decree allowed for him to be extradited to be tried in Germany. Once in Germany he was let free and practiced law until his death in 1976.]

We had many good friends that loved us. One of them was Manias. He came one day and told our servant that he wanted to see my father. The German army had confiscated his house. He had four Germans living in his house. He told my father that the Germans would issue a law that whoever had a Jew business associate, the Germans would take the Jew's share. Manias proposed to my father to transfer his business share to his name in order to be protected. Nikos Manias was an animal merchant. He was very rich. He was not in need of our money.

My mother, who was a fast thinker, advised my father to agree with Manias's proposal. But my father said that he didn't want to insult his associate with such a deal after 20 years of partnership. What an insult! I was present when my father was discussing a false contract with his associate. I heard my father's associate telling my father that we Jews were like the fly that fell in the milk. He continued by saying that we couldn't hide and sooner or later the Germans would find us. He also proposed to my father to go on our own free will wherever the Germans wanted to deport us. My father declined Manias's proposal and made a false contract with his associate. And it was my father's associate that gave my family away to the Germans in exchange of getting my father's business share.

When the war started and my father changed his job from food to metal merchandise, the merchandize was split in two, and because we were afraid that it would be stolen from our

warehouse, my father gave part of the merchandise to Manias.

Manias had our supplies, our assets, and money from us. And we had something safely kept aside. We were living next to the Manias family. They loved us. He wanted to help, especially the children. So, in 1943, Nikos Manias, the head of the family, came and proposed to my father that for my brother Alberto and me he could issue false identities and send us to Athens. Manias issued the false identities. My brother and I were the first to leave the house. We stayed hidden until it was time for us to be sent to Athens.

My parents and my youngest siblings, Jema, Isidor and Renica, left later than us. They went into hiding in Chalkidiki. They could not go far. The Germans would have found them and caught them because apart from my sister Jema, none of the family members spoke Greek.

When I left to go into hiding I only took the necessary things. I only took clothes and my coat and I was very well dressed with those. During the war period I refused to wear new clothes. My mother prepared a new coat for me but I never wore it. She was telling me that the war was still going on and the old coat was worn out. Poor mother! If she had known what was going to happen to her. But I insisted that I wouldn't wear new clothes while people were dying. I was very sensitive in these matters.

Manias had paid 30 pounds for each false identity. My brother's new name was Nikos Angelidis and mine was Mairy Angelidou. I didn't change my first name, only my last name was different. My brother Albertos and I first went into hiding in a house at Evangelistra area [a Christian cemetery area at the lower hill of the old city of Thessaloniki]. It was Easter. Mrs. Zoi hid us for one month.

She had a very nice family. She treated us very well and got compensation, of course. She was paid for hiding us, but it doesn't matter. It is the person that matters. I still remember her. After the war she came to my husband. I told him to give her whatever she asked for. And he gave her money.

During the period we were hiding with Mrs. Zoi, I went with her to Aghia Sophia Church. The only thing that made a big impression on me was that for the first time I saw something like a huge doll hanging and people were calling it 'Ioudas' [Judas] and beating it. People were screaming that he killed Christ. I had never seen anything like that. I was very frightened.

After a month we went by bus to Athens. We never saw the trains taking away the Jews from Thessaloniki. I was traveling with my brother Alberto and a man who escorted us. On the bus was Mrs. Pardo with her daughter and her grandson. She said to me: 'y tu sos Judia?' [Judeo-Spanish: you are also a Jewess?]. I was scared. I pretended that I didn't understand the language she was talking to me.

On the bus my brother Alberto sat in the front while I was in the back. The driver stopped the bus at Ekaterini [or Katerini: capital of the district of Pella, 30 km from Thessaloniki] and we got out. The driver asked me if I was related to the man, pointing at my brother Alberto, who was sitting in the front. I answered that I didn't know him. The man that was escorting us to Athens had told us not to reveal that we were siblings.

Then the driver went to my brother and asked him if he knew me, and my brother's answer was negative, too. Furious, the driver said that I couldn't continue the trip with them. I started crying

although this was a chance for me to go back again to my mother, since I had regretted being separated from her.

But my brother Albertos was reluctant to leave me alone. Everybody in the bus was upset. One man stepped forward. He claimed to be chief commander from the ‘mountain,’ from Andartiko 23. He threatened the driver that in case he didn’t take us both he would betray him to the resistance. The driver didn’t say anything else after that and we continued our trip to Athens.

When we arrived in Athens the man that was escorting us took us to a hotel. Nikos Manias introduced us to his brother Sergios and asked him to take care of us. Mrs. Katina, Sergio’s wife, was afraid to hide us because my brother Albertos was circumcised. But every Sunday they would invite us to eat meat at their home. At our age we needed to eat meat, but we did not.

A while later I met a friend whom I knew from Thessaloniki, Michel Michael. I had had a little love affair with him. The Michael family were ‘Judios’ [Judeo-Spanish: Jews] from Drama [town in East Macedonia]. Their mother, Saul and Michael were living in the small house under ours that my father rented to them. The eldest brother, Mario, was married and he was living on Egnatia Street. Mario had four children.

Michel Michael was a militiaman at Baron Hirsch. He saw my father, my mother and my three younger siblings, Jema, Isidor and Renica, entering the train with the last Jews to leave from Thessaloniki. My father was in a hurry to get on the train because he was afraid that the Germans would hit my youngest siblings and that they would tell them that my brother Albertos and I were hiding in Athens. My father asked Michel, since he was going to come to Athens, to find us and take care of us.

We met with Michel Michael at Syntagma Square [in the center of Athens where the Greek Parliament is]. He found us a house in Sepolia [suburb of Athens], not telling the owners that we were Jews. The period that Athens was under Italian occupation things were good for us. But when the Germans came Michel went to the ‘mountain’ because he was an army officer during Alvanico. Everybody wanted to escape from the Germans.

During the period of the Italian occupation my brother was selling oil at Athinas Street [trade street in the center of Athens]. Sergio himself took him to Megara [farming area in Attica region, close to Athens] to buy oil. And he was selling the oil ‘mezurica, mezurica’ [Judeo-Spanish: measure by measure].

We were actually renting a room in a house. We had the outer room. We paid one pound per month. They didn’t know that we were Jews. We told them that we were from Komotini [town in West Trace, Macedonia], not from Thessaloniki because this would have raised suspicions.

Mrs. Vasiliki who was renting us this room was illiterate. She was sleeping in the kitchen with her two sons. She had two beautiful daughters, too. She gave them for payment to men to go to bed with them. She was also babysitting the babies of various girls. She was bottle feeding them in exchange for payment.

Once a man came to the house and saw me. He told Mrs. Vasiliki to ask me to go to a bar with him at night. When I heard this I was flabbergasted. I told my brother Albertos about the incident. My brother went and told her that I had a psychiatric problem and that I often screamed nonsense. He

told her to leave me alone because I might get insane if I go out.

Every day a policeman was visiting us and my brother gave him oil without getting money from him. The policeman was complaining that he wouldn't come again if my brother insisted giving him oil for free. My brother Albertos told him that he felt like he was giving it to our mother, who was living at Komotini, and this was the reason that he was not asking to be paid for the oil he gave him.

I also remember another story from the period we were living at Mrs. Vasiliki's house. One day she came and told me that although she had no complaints, there was another woman that had asked to rent our room. Her name was Esther. Mrs. Vasiliki wanted to give her the room because she was a Jewess and needed a place to hide. Mrs. Vasiliki wanted to save her. She didn't know that we were Jews, too. Athens was under German occupation by now.

Now, where would we go? Michel had already left for the mountain to give us an advice as an older man. Until then every time Esther was coming to visit Mrs. Vasiliki I was hiding. My brother Albertos, although he was younger than me, was very clever and he still is. He told me not to worry. He advised me next time Esther came I should go out so she could see me. So when Esther came Mrs. Vasiliki wanted to introduce us. I came out to meet Esther. When she saw me she disappeared. She understood that I was Jewish. She never came back again.

When the war ended I met her again at the Cal at Meledinou Street. [The interviewee is referring to the Beth Shalom Synagogue, the main synagogue of the Athens Jewish Community on Melidoni Street.] She came hugging and kissing me. She survived but her son did not.

The Germans had issued a law that every Friday they were giving out food at Meledinou Street to those Jews that were in need. Many Jews signed up in exchange for food. And they were all caught on 25th March. Esther's son had signed up and he was caught and sent to Germany.

My brother wasn't in need of signing up. We had much more food than what we could consume. But my brother had two friends that did sign up. Every day the three of them would leave early in the morning, pretending they were going to work. They didn't want the neighbors to get suspicious. Both of them were caught, too.

Every Sunday I was going to the church so the neighbors wouldn't get suspicious. In the house opposite ours there lived a policeman. He understood that we were Jews in hiding but didn't betray us. A judge was living in our courtyard. He, too, knew that we were Jews but didn't betray us. He told me so when the war ended.

My brother didn't want to leave me alone. He would come at noon for lunch. I was asking him, while we were eating, if he had any news from our mother. He was telling me that all were very well, adding that our mother and our sister Jema were sewing hemlines. So we would raise our glass to the health of our mother. In fact my brother was listening to Radio London. He knew about the crematoria. But he never told me about it for almost two and a half years.

Once my brother Alberto came home and told me that we had to leave for Cairo. I couldn't disagree. He was the one going out and wandering around. He explained that he had found two men, he had given them money and they would take us with a small boat to a place, which I cannot recall, and from there we would go to Cairo.

In the morning my brother left, pretending that he was going to work. I prepared our things, put them in our small suitcase and waited. I waited and waited and had no news from my brother. It was night by now and I thought he had been caught. Suddenly I heard the key turn in the door. My brother had returned, black and blue from the beating. I took care of his wounds and he explained what had happened.

The people that he had given money to take us to the place from where we could leave for Cairo betrayed him to the Germans. The Germans caught him. They knew that he was Jewish and that he had a sister hiding in Athens. My brother denied everything. They took down his pants and saw that he was circumcised.

They were beating him so he would tell them were I was hiding. The German officer then called a policeman to escort my brother to a place where they would execute him. And guess who that policeman was! He was the man that my brother was giving oil to for free every day.

How everything is well thought out by the Almighty! The policeman took him pretending he would take my brother for execution. He took my brother outside and let him escape. My brother ran back home. This happened in June. A while later we were liberated.

Things got more difficult as days went by. But my brother was reluctant leaving me alone in Athens. Mrs. Katina Manias proposed that she could hide me alone. They were very good people. They loved me very much. So my brother Alberto left for the ‘mountain’ and I went to stay with Sergio Manias’s family. They had a house like a palace at the end of Acharnon Street [near the center of Athens].

We were liberated in July. [Editor’s note: Athens was actually liberated in September 1944]. I was with the Manias family when we were liberated. My brother was still at the ‘mountain.’ We didn’t know whether he was dead or alive. The day we were liberated the bells of the churches were ringing, airplanes were flying. Then the English came. Those that were at the ‘mountain’ started coming back.

- **Post-war**

When the war ended my brother Albertos went directly to Thessaloniki. He wanted to check what had happened to our house. He told me that he wanted to prepare the house before our mother’s return. In our house we had left an army officer from Poligyros [town in Central Macedonia; capital of Chalkidiki]. He divorced his wife but she continued staying at our house. So my brother went back first.

Mrs. Katina proposed that I should stay and have fun with them. We would go to theaters, thus I stayed. But the ‘Kinima’ 24 started. Greeks started fighting among themselves. Mrs. Sergios and Mrs. Katina were so much afraid that they went hiding with the English. I stayed with their children and their two servants. The Mania children and I were having a good time. We were staying in, eating, drinking and having fun.

But at some point we had to learn what was going on outside the house. We went out and we were caught because Mairy Mania, Sergio’s and Katina’s daughter was holding a newspaper of the other party than the one that caught us. We didn’t know where they were taking us. I think it was some

mountain.

I approached the people that had caught us and told them that I was Jew and that these people had saved my life. Somebody heard me and said that he would help us escape. And as we were making a turn somewhere, Mairy, Mania's servant Nitsa, the man that said he could help us and I started running to the opposite direction than the one they were taking us and we were saved.

When the 'Kinima' ended Katina and Sergios came back. Mairy Mania gave me some money and told me to go to the house I was hiding and give the money to Mrs. Vasiliki as a gesture of appreciation. Mrs. Vasiliki's family was poor and illiterate.

I went to Mrs. Vasiliki without knowing what had happened to them. Mrs. Vasiliki hugged and kissed me and said that although she saved me her son was not saved. She had sent her son Yannis to Andartiko to bring back money to his family and there he was killed. Yannis, a very nice kid, had passed away. I started crying because I could not believe that such a good boy had died this way. Anyway that was it.

I returned to Thessaloniki in 1945 with the boat 'Eleni Embirikou.' I was traveling with Mario Michael. I was expecting that his brother Michel would come with us but he had died. That's why I later got married to Alfredo. All Michael family members are dead now.

Only a daughter is living in Thessaloniki and another one in Turkey. Life goes on. My brother was expecting me at the port of Thessaloniki. Alfredo was there, too, and saw me, and when he returned to his house he announced that the one he wanted to marry had just arrived and he would marry her, meaning me, no matter what.

First thing I did upon my arrival was to go to our house. It was just as we had left it. I started trembling. I thought I was hearing my mother's voice from the kitchen, calling me. I was in great distress. I had no idea at that point what had happened to them.

People started coming back from the camps. I was holding a picture of my mother and another of my sister Jema and went around asking if anyone knew anything about them. Their answer was that they had been burned in the crematorium. I thought they were crazy.

My brother knew the truth from the start because he was listening to Radio London. When I asked him he would answer that everybody was very well. And I believed him. I didn't know and I couldn't imagine such a thing. Later on my brother told me the truth.

He asked me not to wander around any more asking about my relatives. He explained that these people that had returned from Auschwitz were not crazy and that they were telling the truth. I started hitting him because for more than two years he had been lying to me. I was in a very bad psychological state for more than one year.

My father, my mother and my youngest siblings, Jema, Isidor and Renica, went to Chalkidiki. The merchants that my father used to collaborate with told him to go there. From Chalkidiki they would pass across to Aghios Nikolaos of Aghion Oros [Mount Athos, the third 'finger' of Chalkidiki Peninsula]. From there they would travel with a small boat to Volos [capital of Magnisia district]. If they managed to arrive at Volos, which was under Italian occupation, they would be safe. But the boat didn't come and they were betrayed.

My father's associate went to the mayor of the village where they were hiding on Chalkidiki. He told the mayor that if he didn't send the Karasso family back to Thessaloniki to the Germans, the Germans would come to the village. My father didn't want to bring damage to the village, so he returned and the Germans never came to this village.

My parents and siblings were the last Jews to leave Thessaloniki along with the Thessaloniki Jewish Community Board members. Michel Michael told us so. As soon as I learned the truth about my family members I gave my mother's crystal chandelier to the Cal in the memory of Smoel Karasso's family.

As more Jews were returning to Thessaloniki group marriages were being performed.

We started meeting those we knew from before. I found my girlfriends. Fridda Medina came back from Auschwitz because she spoke German. She told me that my sister Jema was working in Auschwitz for a while. The younger ones went directly to the crematorium.

On the day of Kippur the most gifted girls of Thessaloniki, among them my sister Jema, were selected and sent to the crematorium. Fridda is living in Israel now and I miss her very much. Nina Molho, the daughter of Rabbi Molho, came back, too. They were hiding somewhere in Thessaloniki. Only one didn't come back: Margo Walker was gassed in Auschwitz.

Fanny and Bella, two young girls of my sister Jema's age, returned from Auschwitz. They didn't have a place to stay. My brother proposed to offer them my sister's room. My brother brought his friends to live in our house, too. All the boys were sleeping on the veranda.

It was summer. So Bella and Fanny came to live with us. Allegri Kapon said to me how could I take them in without even knowing them. I didn't care; I would give them my sister's room to stay. And with God's will they left my house as brides.

On the other hand my neighbor Sylvia didn't have a place to go. The Jewish Community of Thessaloniki was not yet organized. They put up the ones that came back and had no place to stay at the school. Not all women are the same. Some upon return wanted to go to bed with men.

They were ten people in each room. Sylvia was very good looking. When she went to lie down a man came on top of her. When she realized what was going on there she tried to slash her wrists. She survived the Germans and tried to commit suicide here. She was sent to the hospital immediately.

In the hospital she met her future husband. Her husband has died now and Sylvia lives at the old-age home. We used to be neighbors. Every night I would visit her and ask her to tell me about the camps. She would narrate everything in great detail so I know everything.

Before he left, my father gave our house to an army commander, Mr. Laliotis. He divorced his wife. When we returned Lalioti's family, his wife and two children, went to my mother's room and they wouldn't leave our house, no matter what. We couldn't take back our house. She gave us my room only. The bathroom was locked. It was stuffed with food. We couldn't even shower.

Mimi Rousso knew the police commander. He told us that the only way to throw her out was if she did something violent against us. Lalioti's wife had placed flowerpots on the big veranda. Fani took

them and put them in my room on a big table I had there and locked the door. The woman started screaming, asking for the key and insisting that the pots were hers. Fanny and Bella were standing outside my room. I was trembling. My brother went and called the police.

She called her ex-husband. Laliotis was claiming that my father had sold the house to him. But my brother had already got the papers of inheritance at the Mayor's Office where it was written that the house belongs to the heirs of Smoel Karasso, Alberto and Mairy Smoel Karasso ne di [French: born by] Rachel. I told him that he could take all our belongings but he couldn't take the house.

Laliotis was so furious that he broke the door. He threw the flowerpots down. We closed the door immediately and waited for the police. The police officer said that now we could officially throw them out because they had broken my room's door.

The police officer called Laliotis and told him that they had to leave our house first thing in the morning or else they would loose all their belongings. The next day they left taking with them all our belongings. The only things they left were two armchairs, the dining chairs and whatever was in my room. They stole everything we had.

We started cleaning the house and inviting grooms. Every Sunday we would cook and sit altogether for lunch. And every night we went out. Bella was married to a very good man. He was a 'tenekelero' [Judeo-Spanish: tin smith] from Kapani [popular covered bazaar-market in Thessaloniki].

Fanny had an affair, too. She was in love with someone from Block 10. [Editor's note: Block 10 was a cellblock in Auschwitz where women and men were used as experimental subjects for German doctors. Although Block 10 was in the men's camps, the experiments were mostly conducted on women.] She was very beautiful.

Everybody told her that she couldn't have kids with him but she loved him so much that she didn't care. They were married and went to the USA and lived happily ever after. Her husband has died now. Bella also got married and went to the USA.

Things were not easy at first. We were not given help from the Jewish community or from the government. Originally we thought that we could take back my father's shop. My father's associate agreed to meet with my brother Albertos. But when he saw that my brother didn't have the paper that said that the agreement he had with my father was fake, he turned my brother away.

My brother Albertos was very courageous. He was working here and there after the war. Then his friend Alchech gave him medicines to sell at pharmacies on commission. He was very capable and hardworking. But after a while my brother Albertos was called to the army. He would be sent to Athens were there was still the 'Kinima.' Two of his friends had already died there. He had survived the Germans and didn't want to die because of the rebellion. So he left and went to Israel. Things were very hard for him there.

When I learned that Michel Michael had died I wanted to leave for the USA since all the members of my family had perished. But my brother didn't let me. I was very obedient. So I got engaged to my future husband Alfredo Angel.

- **Married life**

My husband Alfredo Angel was born in 1909 and died on 1st May 1983. He was a textiles merchant. He was born and raised in Thessaloniki, and so were his ancestors. I didn't get married again when he died, although I was still young and beautiful then.

I got married on 6th July 1946 at Cal Monastirlis. It was very difficult for me. I was crying all the time. I was thinking of my mother saying what a marriage she would organize for me when I would get married. All our friends and relatives came to the wedding. Thessaloniki started having Jews again. Approximately 2,000 returned. Now approximately 500 Jews are living in Thessaloniki.

My daughter Lucy was born on 26th August 1947. I cried when she was born because I didn't give birth to a boy. But she was beautiful, like a dolly. Five years and a few months later I gave birth to my second daughter Ellie-Rachel. They are both wonderful kids that I still torture. [The interviewee means that she has them look after her in her old age.]

Lucy's friend often asks me how both of my daughters became so magnificent. My answer is that I never quarreled with my husband in front of my children. This was the way I was raised by my parents. For every problem I faced I went downstairs to Jenoula and Miko Saias. They solved all of my problems.

The happiest days of my life, my wonderful life, was my prewar life. And it had ended. At least I raised two very good children.

My husband and I gradually started repairing my house. We made a new entrance. My room was what used to be my mother's room. I spent the whole day with my daughters in Nona Mirou's room. Only at night I would return to my room. At the piece of land at the back of my house three shops were built. One was a grocery store, the other a shoe-repair place. The owners came from villages.

Both of my daughters went to Calamari School [post-war French missionary school]. My daughter Lucy sat exams to enter college but she was not accepted. Thus I sent her to Calamari. I found my siblings' school photographs and went to ma mère. I told her: 'Elle sont allée à Auschwitz,' [French: They went to Auschwitz.]

When she saw the photographs she hugged me and started crying. If I was going to gain something it was with the help of these photographs, since all of my siblings and I had gone to this school. I asked if she could give me a discount on the monthly payment because I wanted my daughter to be admitted to this school.

Their father's job was not going so well because in the meantime nylon was invented and cotton, which my husband was selling, wasn't so popular any more. Still in tears, her answer was that my daughter would be admitted without payment. I thanked her and told her that I had a younger daughter, too. Her answer was that both would be admitted without payment. So I never paid a penny.

I am very ashamed of what I am about to say but at first, when I realized that six million had perished during the Holocaust I lost my faith. But when I got married and Lucy was born I had to pass on a faith to my children. I couldn't take them to the church. I was a Jew and I took them to Cal and started all over again.

I tried to keep some of the Jewish customs, but not all of them. First of all I cooked on Sabbath, not very much cooking, just fish. Every Friday we would go to the small Cal [a small synagogue built after the war near the building of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki] but without the glass of oil that my mother used to give me to take every Friday. I was just lighting a candle. After the service we would all go to the Jewish Community Club where we were offered 'pastelicos.'

We did celebrate the holidays after the war but not with such grandiose as we did before. We celebrated Pesach, Kippur and Rosh Hashanah. On Noches de Kippur [Judeo-Spanish: Erev Kippur] I would go with the glass of oil to the synagogue in memory of my mother.

I never learned how to cook with my mother. I never went to the kitchen to see how she was doing it. The cooking customs I learned were from Veta Franco and Kapon, who were married before the war. Sarina Michael, who was living downstairs, also taught me a lot. All of them knew various Jewish cooking customs.

Kehila Monastirlis was the same as it was before the war. The only difference is a plaque in memory of the 98 percent of the Jews of Thessaloniki that perished during the Holocaust. This synagogue opens only for the high holidays.

There is nothing more to say about my post-war life. From then on everything was ordinary in my life.

It is very recently that I came to live in Athens. I had an accident. I fell and I was hospitalized at Erikos Dynan Hospital in Athens. For two years I had a metal apparatus in my leg. I've had problems walking because I am old, too. I was living with my daughter Lucy for four years. My son in law, Mimi Bezas, is an extraordinary man. Four years he was taking care of me and paying all my expenses.

After all the wealth I had with my father, now the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki is helping me with the expenses.

We celebrate Pesach at Yvette's, my son-in-law's sister's house. Now they are saying it in Greek so the children can understand. They don't know Hebrew or Judeo-Spanish. Mimi pretends that he can read some Hebrew. So now I cannot recite anything because they are reading the Haggadah Ebreo [Judeo-Spanish: Hebrew] or in Greek that I don't like at all. Rosh Hashanah we celebrate at my daughter Lucy's house, with fish and everything that is customary. We celebrate with my children, my grandchildren and my four great-grandchildren, the one better than the other.

The first book I read when I returned to Thessaloniki was 'L' histoire d' Anne Frank' [French: The Diary of Anne Frank]. But it was when I visited Auschwitz and lit candles and recited the Kaddish for my beloved ones that my soul was put to rest. I saw everything in Auschwitz. I saw even the boxes with the poison [Zyklon B] that they were throwing from the window at the crematorium in order to kill them. Everything in Auschwitz was very well preserved. I was there during the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

My sister Jema was sent to work from Auschwitz to Birkenau. It was two and a half hours walking distance. [Editor's note: The distance between Auschwitz and Birkenau is approximately 1.5 km. However, because the people were sick, weak, starved and exhausted as well as terrorized and beaten by the Nazis along the way, it took them longer to cover that distance.]

I did the same distance in a wheelchair because I couldn't walk. When I arrived at Birkenau I fell on the crematorium and started crying. I was screaming: 'they were burned; they were burned' just at the same place that they were reciting the Schema before being burned. [Shma Israel (Hebrew: Listen Israel): the first two words of the major Jewish prayer]

I did Haskavah. I lit candles for my siblings, Jema, Isidor and Renica, and two for my mother and my father. I started screaming: 'Mamica mia regalada [Judeo-Spanish: Mother, my beloved one] salu buena Mimi'. Mimi has some health problems. Mimi for me is better than a son. Then I started saying the names of my beloved ones. I could not stop crying. My daughter Lucy didn't know how to take me away. But I did what I felt I had to do. And now I can die in peace. This was the reason that I went to Auschwitz.

When we left from Birkenau it was raining. Mimi, my daughter Lucy and Morris Chatzis were pushing the wheelchair. I liked Morris because of his nice way of talking. I also read his journal 'Krissara' 25. In an issue dedicated to our trip to Poland he had a picture of me in the wheelchair.

On the bus returning home Morris asked me to sing a song with him. And we sang [singing in Greek]: 'Ta kaimena ta niata ti grigora pou pernoun... san kandili..., san asteri...' ['Youth goes by very quickly, like a candle, like a star...']

- **Glossary**

1 The Fire of Thessaloniki: In the night of 18th August 1917, an enormous fire, fed by the famous Vardar wind, destroyed the city centre where most of the Jews lived. It was a region of 227 hectares, where 15,000 families lived, 10,000 of them were Jewish families which were deprived of their homes.

The Jews were hit the hardest, since more than two thirds of the property destroyed by the fire was Jewish and only a tenth of that immense fortune was insured. Nearly all the schools, 32 synagogues, 50 oratories, all the cultural centres, libraries, clubs, etc. were annihilated.

Despite of the aid of a sum of 40,000 golden pounds collected from all over the world, the community never recovered from that disaster.

The Jewish face of the city that had been there for more than five centuries was wiped out in 36 hours. 25,000, out of 53,000 of the stricken Jews that belonged mostly to the lower and middle class, were forced to live in the working-class districts that were hastily built in a rudimentary fashion. (Source: Rena Molho, 'Jewish Working-Class Neighborhoods established in Salonica Following the 1890 and the 1917 Fires,' in Rena Molho, 'Salonica and Istanbul: Social, Political and Cultural Aspects of Jewish Life,' The Isis Press, Istanbul, 2005, pp.107-126.)

2 Andari or anderi: dark long outfit with sleeves, open in the front, usually worn by men.

3 Ladino: Also known as Judeo-Spanish, it is the spoken and written Hispanic language of Jews of Spanish and Portuguese origin. Ladino did not become a specifically Jewish language until after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 (and Portugal in 1495) - it was merely the language of their province. It is also known as Judezmo, Dzhudezmo, or Spaniolit. When the Jews were expelled from Spain and Portugal they were cut off from the further development of the language, but they

continued to speak it in the communities and countries to which they emigrated.

Ladino therefore reflects the grammar and vocabulary of 15th-century Spanish. In Amsterdam, England and Italy, those Jews who continued to speak 'Ladino' were in constant contact with Spain and therefore they basically continued to speak the Castilian Spanish of the time.

Ladino was nowhere near as diverse as the various forms of Yiddish, but there were still two different dialects, which corresponded to the different origins of the speakers: 'Oriental' Ladino was spoken in Turkey and Rhodes and reflected Castilian Spanish, whereas 'Western' Ladino was spoken in Greece, Macedonia, Bosnia, Serbia and Romania, and preserved the characteristics of northern Spanish and Portuguese.

The vocabulary of Ladino includes hundreds of archaic Spanish words, and also includes many words from different languages: mainly from Hebrew, Arabic, Turkish, Greek, French, and to a lesser extent from Italian. In the Ladino spoken in Israel, several words have been borrowed from Yiddish.

For most of its lifetime, Ladino was written in the Hebrew alphabet, in Rashi script, or in Solitreo. It was only in the late 19th century that Ladino was ever written using the Latin alphabet. At various times Ladino has been spoken in North Africa, Egypt, Greece, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, France, Israel, and, to a lesser extent, in the United States and Latin America.

4 Baron Hirsch camp: one of the poorest Jewish working class neighborhoods near the old railway station in Salonica. During the German occupation it was turned into a ghetto, the so-called Baron Hirsch Camp, where the Nazis assembled the Jews before they deported them.

5 3E (Ethniki Enosi Ellados): lit. National Union of Greece, a fascist nationalist organization, founded in 1929 by George Kosmidis. It had about 2000 members, of whom the majority was immigrants. [Source: J. Hondros, 'Occupation and Resistance: the Greek Agony,' New York, 1983]

6 Campbell Fire (Pogrom on 29th June 1931): Responsible for the arson of the poor neighborhood Campbell was the Ethniki Enosis Ellas - National Union Greece, short: EEE also known as the 3E or the 'Iron Helmets.' This organization was the backbone of fascism in Greece in the period between the two World Wars. It was established in Thessaloniki in 1927.

The most important element of the 3E political voice was anti-Semitism, an expression mostly of the Christian traders of the city in order to displace the Jewish competitors. President of the organization was a merchant, Mr. G. Cormides, there was also a secretary, a banker, D. Haritopoulos, and chief spokesman Nikos Fardis, editor-in-chief of the newspaper Makedonia.

The occasion for the outbreak of anti-Semitism in Thessaloniki was the inauguration of the new Maccabi Hall in June 1931. In a principal article signed by Nikos Fardis, from Saturday, 20th June 1931, it was said that Maccabi of Thessaloniki had placed itself in favor of an Autonomous Greek Macedonia.

The journalist "revealed" the conspiracy of Jews, Bulgarians, Communists and Catholics against Macedonia. Two days later, the Ministry of the Interior confirmed the newspaper's allegations despite the strict denial of the Maccabi representatives. All the anti-Semitic and fascist organizations were aroused.

This marked the beginning of the riots that resulted in the pogrom of Campbell. Elefterios Venizelos was again involved after the 1917 fire, speaking at the parliament as Prime Minister, and talked with emphasis about the law-abiding stance of the Jewish population, but simultaneously permitted the prosecution of Maccabi for treason against the state.

Let alone the fact that the newspaper Makedonia with the inflaming anti-Semitic publications was clearly pro-Venizelian. At the trial, held in Veroia ten months later, Fardis and the leaders of EEE were found not guilty while three refugees were found guilty, but with mitigating circumstances and therefore were freed on the spot.

It is worth noting that at the 1933 general election, the Jews of Thessaloniki, in one block voted against Venizelos. [Source: Bernard Pierron, 'Juifs et chrétiens de la Grèce moderne,' Harmattan, Paris 1996, pp. 179-198]

7 Salepi: hot soothing beverage usually drunk in winter, made from roots of orchids mixed with flour and boiled with water or milk.

8 Coulouri: small round bread with a hole in the middle, like a bagel but much thinner, with sesame on top, sold usually in the streets, primarily in Thessaloniki.

9 Saint Jean Baptiste de la Salle: French missionary school founded in Salonica in 1888.

10 Saint Vincent de Paul: French missionary school founded in Salonica in 1783.

11 Alchech School: private Jewish elementary and high school for boys, founded at the end of the 19th century. It was also called Francoallemande because students were taught both French and German.

12 Gymnasium: Greek equivalent of high school. It used to be 6 grades, but nowadays it is 3 years, followed by three Lyceum years.

13 Pinto School: private Jewish elementary school for both boys and girls

14 L'Indépendant: commercial Jewish newspaper written in French. It was published from 1909 to 1942. Editor: A. Matarasso.

15 Monastir Synagogue [Monastirioton in Greek]: founded in 1923, inaugurated in 1927 by the Aruesti family who during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), along with other Jewish families of Monastir (today Bitola), sought shelter in the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki and settled in the city. This synagogue survived the destructions during World War II because it was used as the headquarters of the Red Cross.

16 Aruesti: The Aruesti family sought shelter in the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki – along with other families from Monastir – during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913). Ten years later, in 1923, the Aruesti family founded the Monastirioton Synagogue, which today is the main and oldest synagogue in Thessaloniki.

17 Thessaloniki Ghettos: Until the German occupation there was never a ghetto in Thessaloniki. During the occupation the Germans created three main ghettos: 1. Eastern Thessaloniki: Fleming Street Ghetto, 2. Western Thessalonica: Sygrou Street Ghetto, 3. Baron Hirsch Ghetto in the Baron

de Hirsch neighborhood. These were formerly neighborhoods with a dense, yet not exclusively Jewish population. (Source: Mark Mazower, Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941-44, New Haven and London)

18 Pascual: Judeo-Spanish: kosher for Passover; appropriate for use or consumption during the week of the Jewish Easter (Pesach or Passover), a time when the Jewish people do not eat food that raises, e.g. bread

19 **Bumuelos (or bumolikos, burlikus)**

A sweetmeat made from matzah, typical for Pesach. First, the matzah is put into water, then squashed and mixed with eggs. Balls are made from the mixture, they are fried and the result is something like donuts.
20 Vardaris neighborhood or Vardar de Hirsch: Built after the 1890 fire thanks to a donation by Moise de Hirsch to house the fire victims and the Russian Jews who came seeking shelter in Salonica, fleeing from the pogroms in Russia. During the occupation it housed 800 families.

21 Greek-Albanian War/Greek-Italian War (1940-1941): Greece was drawn into WWII when Italian troops crossed the borders of Albania and violated Greek territory on 28th October 1940. The Italian attack of Greece seemed obvious, despite the stated disagreement of Hitler and the efforts of Ioannis Metaxas, who was trying to trying to keep the country in a neutral stance.

Following a series of warning signs, culminating in the sinking of Battleship 'Elli' on 15th August 1940, by Italian torpedoes, and all of these failing to provoke the Greek government to react, the Italian Ultimatum was delivered on 28th October 1940, and it demanded the free passage of the Italian army through Greek soil, as well as sole control of a series of strategic points of the country.

The rejection of the ultimatum by Metaxas was in line with the public opinion in Greece and led to the immediate declaration of war by Italy against Greece.

This war took place mostly in the mountains of Hepeirous. In the Greek-Albanian War approximately 12.500 Greek Jews took part and 513 Greek Jews died fighting. The Greek counter-offensive pushed the Italians deep into Albania and the Greek army maintained the initiative throughout the winter capturing the southern Albanian towns of Corce, Aghioi Saranda, and Girocaster. [Source: Thanos Veremis, Mark Dragoumis, 'Historical Dictionary of Greece' (London 1995)]

22 Monastirlis: Judeo-Spanish: one who came from Monastir and sought shelter in the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki – along with other families from Monastir – during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913); Monastirioton in Greek

23 Andartiko or Mountain: Abbreviation for Greek Resistance during World War II, composed of civilians and members of the communist party. They formed an army stationed in various mountainous locations of the Greek countryside where they formed groups of resistance; andartis: in Greek: one who revolts or, one who resists.

24 Greek Civil War (1946-49): also known as Kinima or Movement, fought from 1946 to 1949 by the Governmental forces, receiving logistical support by the United Kingdom at first and later by the United States, and the Democratic Army of Greece, the military branch of the Greek Communist Party (KKE), was the result of a highly polarized struggle between leftists and rightists which started from 1943 and targeted the power vacuum that the German occupation during World War II had created.

One of the first conflicts of the Cold War, according to some analysts it represents the first example of a post-war Western interference in the internal politics of a foreign country, and it marked the first serious test of the Churchill-Stalin percentages agreement. (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_Civil_War)

25 Krissara: Jewish monthly newspaper published privately in Athens by Morris Chatzis. The first issue was published in fall 2003 and the newspaper ceased publication in December 2005.