

Tovi Franko In Primary School



In this photo you can see my son Tovi Franko on the steps of his primary school entrance. He is posing there with a couple of his friends, whose names I don't know. You can see the name of the school on the wall behind them. It says "Nilufer Hatun İlkokulu" which means Lady Nilufer, a Turkish word for lily and also a name, Primary School.

My husband and I had two children. Our son is Tovi Franko and our daughter is Feride Petilon (née Franko). Tovi was born in 1950 and Feride in 1957. We followed the Jewish traditions throughout our lives. My husband would always feel proud to say that he was Jewish wherever he was. On the other hand, our son's circumcision ceremony was quite a modest one. Lemonade, biscuits, and as was the fashion of the time, in a small bag, candied almonds and pastry, and a piece of sponge cake was offered to the guests.

My son's bar mitzvah ceremony was done on a Saturday morning in the Caddebostan Synagogue [synagogue on the Asian side of Istanbul], and later on a cocktail was given in the Suadiye Hotel [a hotel on the Asian shores of Istanbul]. The synagogue was crowded. I had bought a blue suit from Paris for this occasion, and my shoes and hat were white. It was August and very hot. We had guests coming from Burgazada. I had prepared lunch for them at my house, so that they didn't have to go and come back from the island. I had a tablecloth which I had embroidered for the Bar mitzvah, but I was afraid to use it in case it got dirty. I then placed it in my daughter's bottom drawer.

In those days, the tefillin ceremony wasn't ostentatious. My husband and our son went on a Thursday morning, two days before the Bar mitzvah ceremony, and had the tefillin ceremony and came back home. Then we gave out candies. That was it.

My son, Tovi Franko grew up according to the Jewish traditions. He even became the president of Amikal, which was one of the popular Jewish youth clubs of the time. Tovi started his business life with his father, and like most other young men didn't like working with his father very much. He founded his own business after a short period of time. Nevertheless, he couldn't part from the family business, which was the leather trade. He exported ready-made leather. His father helped

him with the supply of raw materials. My husband was a well-respected personality in Kazlıcesme. [the center of leather trade in old times in Istanbul. Later on all the leather factories and tanneries were moved to Tuzla, a suburb of Istanbul.] His nickname was "corbaci" [soup maker] meant a non-muslim boss, and his every word was attended.

My son married Belinda Pardo and they were married for 23 years. Then they decided to get divorced and separated their ways. They had two children, a son, Ilker and a daughter Nuket. Ilker, my grandson married a girl named Lin Bildirici and they now have a 2-month-old son called Eren Tal.