

At Home



A photograph taken at home

The other people in the photograph: on the right, my father, in center, myself, on the left, my wife. Seated is my mother, my two nephews, Albert and Marsel

My father, Saul Modiano, was born in Salonika in 1887. He passed away in Istanbul in 1970. My mother, Ester Modiano [her maiden name is Kohen] was also born in Salonika in 1894, and passed away in Istanbul, in 1979. My parents are both buried at the Italian-Jewish Cemetery in Sisli, Istanbul.

My father was of medium-height, and was slightly overweight. He had whitish hair. He had glasses, but only used them when he was reading. He did not wear a tie around the house, but he always wore one when he was outside. He always wore clean, fashionable clothes. My mother, Ester Modiano, was also of medium-height and was slightly chubby. She had a very reserved personality. Her hair was medium-length. She wore casual clothing both inside and outside the house. She usually wore lipstick, and used nail polish.

My father was a very serious, introverted kind of man. He did not speak much, and when he did, he spoke with utmost care - as if he was weighing each word. He was a reserved man just like my mother was. My father was also very smart and perceptive. He did not have a lot of time to read, but he followed all major news of the day. My mother did spend a lot of her time reading. She graduated from a French school in Salonika.

My parents both went to school in Salonika. The school my father attended was called 'Idadiye' back then. It was a special kind of Italian school. My father's native tongue was Italian, and my mother's was Spanish. They spoke in Spanish and French between each other and their own parents.

When he lived in Salonika, my father used to work as a regular employee at a firm. Later on, when he came to Istanbul, he founded his own business. He became a commissioned representative for some factories located in Europe. He also provided those European companies with insurance expertise, and handled their insurance needs.

My mother, Ester Modiano, was born in Salonika in 1894. My mother went to a Greek school, but the educational language of the school was French. She later attended a French school. When my mother was attending high school, she was able to secure a scholarship to study at the Alliance Israelite Universelle. She was going to go to France in an effort to further her French skills. But, my father, being her groom-to-be, talked her out of it. He actually did not let her go there. As a result, my mother took a job as a French teacher in a Greek school. French was a very popular language back then; students would begin learning French starting from elementary school. My mother continued teaching French until she got married. She did not work after she came to Istanbul. My parents had, what I would call, an arranged marriage. My mother's brother, Jak Kohen, happened to be my father's best friend long before she and my father met. Starting from when my father was 14-15, he would go over to her house all the time to see Jak. My father and mother became very close over time. They got married when my father was 31. My parents were both religious people, but they did not spend all their time at the synagogue. They did, however, observe all important Jewish Holidays, and specific traditions according to each Holiday. My father placed a special importance on keeping Kosher. He would always go to the synagogue on Friday evenings, Saturday mornings and on Holidays. My mother, on the other hand, would only go during the Holidays. Seats would be reserved for my parents at both the Buyukada and the Italian Synagogues.

My mother died in 1979. She is interned in the Italian Jewish cemetery.

I was born in Istanbul in 1926.

My wife, Ester Modiano, was born in Plovdiv, Bulgaria in 1927.