

Suzi&Sami Schilton Wedding



This photo was taken on the day of my wedding to Suzi Schilton (nee Bitek Behar) in 1957. We got married at the Italian Synagogue. In the front row, from left to right, you can see my wife Suzi's mother, Rebeka Bitek Behar, then beside her my wife Suzi and me, the woman sitting beside me is my mother Viktorya Schilton and the little girl sitting beside her is my niece, Doli Samuel. In the back row, standing you can see from left to right, my aunt Fortune Danon, beside her, my wife's father, Menahem Bitek Behar, beside him my cousin Viktorya Danon, on her right, my brother-in-law, Aleks Samuel, and on his right, his wife and my sister, Suzi Samuel (nee Schilton). The photo was taken at a photo studio in Beyoglu after the wedding. The wedding was really very nice. There was quite a crowd at the Italian synagogue and the atmosphere was great. We had our party that night at the Lido Restaurant/night club in Ortakoy. The Lido was a very famous place at the time and it was ideal for these kinds of celebrations. We had dinner there and it was really a very nice evening all in all.

My wife, Suzi Behar Bitek, was born in Ortakoy. Her native language is Judeo-Spanish. My wife's real surname was Behar. When the Surname Law was passed, some Jews took Turkish names, and my wife's family added the name Bitek [turkish for only one] to their surname. My wife's father, Menahem Behar bitek was from Ortakoy, and he was very religious because his own father, Moshe Behar was a rabbi. Menahem Behar therefore raised his daughter with a very strong religious identity. Her mother, Rebeka Rifka Behar (nee Azuz) was a dressmaker. She used to go to the houses of ladies and sewed all day.

My wife, Suzi graduated from the St. Benoit Lycée [French Catholic high school]. We are distantly related to her family actually. Our relatives in Ortakoy used to praise this girl a lot. After I broke up from my first fiancée, Beti Konfino, our relatives said Suzi was a great girl, a very good girl. So I made a decision and one day they introduced us at one of our relative's homes. Then they said, "now that you know each other, why don't you go out together for a while"; so we started going out to get to know each other better. This did not last long because my wife's father was a very strict man; he did not think we should go out together for 6 or 8 months. After a short time he wanted me to make a decision, it was either Yes or No. So I said Yes. But he said, "It is not enough for you to say, yes, I agree. You have to get engaged". So we got engaged in a matter of 1-2 months.

Our engagement was celebrated at home. These things always happened at home in those days. All friends and family were invited, long tables were set, rings were put on each other's fingers and all in all it was a very nice day. We got married 8 months after the engagement. The fact that my wife was Jewish was an important factor in our marriage because at that time it was very unusual to hear about marrying someone who was not Jewish. That was a very very rare thing.