

Ilia Rozenfeld's Father Alexandr Rozenfeld



My father Alexandr Rozenfeld. This photo was taken in the TrestUkrphoto shop in Poltava in 1954,. He sent me this photo to Kiev for the memory. This is my father's last photograph.

My father Alexandr was born in 1888. He was the first son in the family, had to help his father to support the family. Therefore, after finishing an elementary Jewish school at the age of 12 my grandfather took him to Kharkov (440 km from Kiev) to the Portugalov [editor's note: Portugalov pharmacies were in all bigger towns of the czarist Russia] pharmacy where my father studied pharmacology working in this pharmacy. He finished a grammar school as an external student and entered the pharmaceutical Faculty of Kharkov University. Upon graduation my father went to Poltava and took up a job in the pharmacy. My father was not religious and didn't observe Jewish traditions, but in those years he got fond of Zionist ideas and read Zhabotinskiy, and attended Zionist clubs. He was also fond of poetry and wrote nice poems. My father also inherited his father's love of music. He went to operas and symphonic music concerts. He met my mother one of those days and they got married in 1919.

My father worked in the pharmacy and later he became director of a pharmaceutical school in Poltava. Thanks to my father, our house was a center of the Rozenfeld family gatherings: my father's sisters, their husbands and children. My parents' friends often visited us. My father recited his poems and Russian and foreign classical poems at their gatherings. My father often went to a book store buying another book each time. We had many My mother read French and German books to remember the languages. There were few books in Yiddish at home. I think they were my grandfather's. I also liked reading. We had a piano. My father never studied music, but he played

by hearing.

There were many joyful and sad events, particularly for Jews, in 1950s. A happy event was the establishment of Israel that attracted Jews from all over the world. My father was particularly happy about this. He had professed the Zionist ideas since childhood. And those were sad years due to the merciless state anti-Semitism in the late 1940s - early 1950s, when Stalin died. My father was ill since the early 1950s. He quit his job and could only walk with a stick. He used to walk in the park and once he gave candy to the children in the park. Trying to give up smoking he always carried sugar candy with him. Two young men approached him and saying: 'Zhydovskaya morda, you are poisoning our children!', they beat him brutally with a metal rod on his ill legs. They beat an old man believing in everything best. My father could never recover from this both physical and spiritual pain. He had to stay in bed and was overwhelmed with depression thinking of the caducity of living and vain hopes. My father passed away in 1955. We buried him in the town cemetery in Poltava without any rituals.