

Sally Uzvalova's Mother Tonia Barzak



My mother Tonia Barzak, nee Roitberg, photographed on her 16th birthday. The photo was taken in 1922 in Yassy.

My mother's family lived in Yassy, Rumania. My grandmother and grandfather came from Yassy. My grandparents owned a small shop where they made children's clothes and bed sheets. There were 5 or 6 employees working in the shop.

There were many Jews in Yassy, about 50% population. They were all religious. There were few synagogues in the town. I remember one of them where my grandparents took me when I came to visit them. This was the biggest synagogue, nicely and richly furnished and decorated. My grandfather had a seat of his own on the lower floor and my grandmother had a seat in the upper floor. There was a strong Jewish community in Yassy that made contributions to the synagogue, to support the poor and sickly Jews and even to provide a dowry to orphaned girls or girls from poor families. My grandfather and grandmother were very religious. They celebrated Shabbat and all Jewish holidays and followed the kashrut.

My grandparents worked very hard, but they provided well for the family. They had six children: three sons and three daughters. The oldest son Yankel was born in 1895. The next one was Mark, born in 1899. Their next son Shymon was born in 1902. Then there came three daughters: Fania, born in 1904, my mother Tonia, born in 1906 and the youngest daughter Etia, born in 1911.

All three daughters finished a grammar school. Besides studying general subjects they were taught manners. Men willingly married graduates of this grammar school, as they made good wives and assisted their husbands in business. My mother's sisters married wealthy men. Fania got married in 1927 and Etia - in 1930. Fania's husband Matey Levinzon was a businessman and Etia's husband owned a store.

All three daughters finished a grammar school. Besides studying general subjects they were taught manners. Men willingly married graduates of this grammar school, as they made good wives and assisted their husbands in business. My mother's sisters married wealthy men. Fania got married in 1927 and Etia - in 1930. Fania's husband Matey Levinzon was a businessman and Etia's husband owned a store.

My mother was a striking beauty when she was young. She became "Miss Yassy" several times.