

Emma Balonova's Husband And His Father



This photograph was taken in Leningrad in 1938. It shows my husband and his father. They were photographed in a photo studio.

My mum's brother Yakov was a very qualified shoemaker. He had a great success making shoes. He also lived in Riga.

By that time managers of a shoe factory in Petersburg decided to improve their production process making better footwear. They wanted to invite highly skilled experts.

Several managers from that factory came to Riga to find the best shoemakers. Among others, they invited my uncle, who became my future father-in-law.

By that time he was already married to my future mother-in-law and they had a son (my future husband) Isaac Yakovlevich Balonov.

They considered themselves to be lucky, when Isaac got an invitation to the Petersburg factory: they did not want to remain in Riga as they were disquieted by rumors of the coming war, they had temptation to go to Russia.

The factory gave them a good apartment, and their family settled there. Later Yakov's younger sister Emma came to their place too.

And here I'll tell you how I appeared in their family.

I finished ten-year secondary school in Gomel and got only excellent marks. Having got excellent school-leaving certificate pupils were exempt from entrance examinations.

I sent my documents to the Leningrad Technological College and became a student of the chemical department.

In August I arrived in Leningrad for interviewing. They placed me in the hostel, and I did not come back to Gomel any more (it was rather expensive to go from Leningrad to Gomel and back).

Do you know the song 'Daddy was a man of honor, but of a very modest income'? You see, these words could be said about my Daddy.

So my life far away from my family began. But in Leningrad I was not lonely: there lived my uncle Yakov (at that time I did not know that he would become my father-in-law).

I visited my uncle every Saturday. I made friends with Maria, my cousin. And my cousin Isaac did not live at home: he was a military man. He was much elder than me, and in 1936 he graduated from the 1st Medical College in Leningrad. [The St. Petersburg Medical University (former College) named after Pavlov was founded in 1897.]

Among the students of their group there were 3 boys, after graduation they all were called up for military service. Isaac served near Leningrad.

Almost every Saturday he came home, bought theater tickets for me and Maria, gave us money to buy cakes. Later he started going to theatres and concerts together with us. It seemed to me that he treated me like a child.

One day before his long business trip, he asked me 'Will you marry me?' I answered 'Yes!' I thought it was a joke. Next day he left. And later I received a letter from him, where he wrote that he would be happy to marry me. Only then I understood it was not a joke, but that day I had to start on my destiny.

One boy from Gomel studied together with me in the College. We were friends at school, came to Leningrad together. People around us thought that we were going to get married.

He always accompanied me wherever I went; but suddenly he noticed that several times I visited the same apartment. He asked me 'Is that your brother you visit there?'

Later I got married, but I it was too much for me to tell him about my wedding. Therefore I asked my friend to inform him about my marriage. He cried and left our College, because it was above his strength to see me there. Later he became a doctor.