

Sarrah Muller



This is me, Sarrah Halfina, photographed during my studies in the technical school in Odessa in 1939. I sent this photo to my parents in Kamenets-Podolskiy.

I was born in Kamenets-Podolskiy in March 1921, I was named after my deceased grandmother Sarrah. My first childhood memories go back to our small two-bedroom apartment in the center of the town that we rented. Our family was very poor. I remember being often hungry, though we always had enough bread to eat. Our family consisted of ten of us at that time. My mother put just a quarter of a chicken to make soup for the whole family and not a bit more.

I went to the Jewish school in 10 minutes' walk from our home right by a Ukrainian school in 1928. It was an ordinary Soviet school, but we studied in Yiddish. We didn't have good practice in Russian and Ukrainian. I remember that our Russian teacher spoke Russian to us in our Russian classes and we replied in Yiddish. We had our textbooks in Yiddish. It was a secular school and we had no religious textbooks. I was the best pupil at school. I became a pioneer. During the period of famine pioneers went to gather spikelets and I was the best at gathering them. I was awarded a coat from a Joint parcel. This was the first coat in my life. I had worn a thick woolen jacket that my mother knitted for me before. Whatever poor we were we didn't lose hearts.

I was an active pioneer and Komsomol member. I was even elected secretary of the Komsomol unit of school. I was fond of literature, theater and singing. We studied Jewish writers and poets Sholom Aleichem, Perez Markish, Kvitko at school. I was fortunate to have met these great people. When I was in the 5th form, I broke my leg sliding from a hill. After a surgery I got a free trip to the recreation center for the children of officials. They held me as an example at the recreation center, for I ate better than other children. There were other Jewish children there.

I loved theater. There was an amateur Jewish theater in Kamenets-Podolskiy. Young people of all nationalities staged Jewish, Ukrainian and Russian classics in the 'Sovrabotnik' [Soviet worker] club. I sang in the ensemble lead my Gurfinkel, a music teacher, in the club of the military unit deployed in the town. I had a very good voice, when I was young. We mainly sang Jewish folk songs and

Soviet Jewish patriotic songs.

In 1936 I finished the 7th form and had to quit school to go to work to help my parents. My uncle helped me to become an apprentice in a bank and soon I became an operator there. However, I had to improve my Russian, I realized. I learned Russian and Ukrainian in a short time. In 1939 I was sent for training in Odessa, and after finishing this course of training I became an instructor. I worked in the bank till 1941. I became secretary of the Komsomol unit and took an active part in public activities.