

Mina Smolianskaya's Sister Rulia Shkolnik With Her Husband Joseph Shkolnik And Sister Donia



My sister Rulia Shkolnik (sitting on the left), her husband Joseph Shkolnik and sister Donia. Photo made in Odessa in 1933 when Donia was visiting us.

I didn't quite get along with my older sister Rulia. I was cheerful and she was different. She wouldn't look at people when walking along the street. I had many friends, acquaintances and admirers. My sister wanted to get married before I did. If I was buying something for the money I earned she demanded that I gave it to her. I had some savings when a neighbor told me that there was plush sold in the village store. I ran there and bought a cut for a dress. Rulia saw it and grabbed it for herself. I ran back to the store, but there was no plush left. Rulia didn't want me to wear better clothes than she before she got married. I found it unfair. It was my money and my work. She didn't work. She just went to school.

Once my mother told me to stay away from home because there was a man to come get acquainted with Rulia. I stayed away until I felt sleepy in the evening and went back home. I didn't know that he was still there. They were sitting at the table discussing Rulia's dowry. There was sugar, jam and tea on the table. My mother had always some sugar for visitors. That man saw me and liked me immediately. He left and we never saw him again. Later Rulia married my former admirer Joseph Shkolnik. We had terminated our relationships by that time. He was my date and Rulia didn't like him at all. She married him after I moved to Odessa. Yes, our relationships with my sister left much to be desired.

My older sister Rulia and her husband moved to Odessa in 1930s. Her husband worked at a plant and Rulia was looking after the children. They had two sons. Their older son Naum named after our father was born in 1935. The younger Efim named after the deceased father of Rulia's husband was born in 1938. I loved my nephews dearly - they were so wonderful! My relationships with his sister improved and we became friends.

In 1947 I went to Odessa to find out what happened to Rulia. Rulia's neighbor told me that Rulia was shot by Germans near her house. Rulia's sons were in the park at that time and her neighbor, a teacher, took the boys to her home when she saw that Germans captured Rulia. They lived with her for a month before somebody reported on them. Fascists took Naum and Efim and the teacher to the yard. They asked the woman why she had given shelter to the Jewish children. She replied that she didn't know that they were Jews. Their commanding officer told the children to take off their clothes. Of course, they both were circumcised. The Germans made a fire in the yard and threw the boys into the fire. The teacher began to scream and they shot her. Rulia's husband Joseph perished at the front.