

Vladimir Olgart's Father Mordko Olgart



My father, Mordko Olgart, was photographed on my request in Skvyra in 1940. The picture was taken to honor his 70th birthday.

My father was born in a small town near Warsaw in 1870. At that time this area was part of the Russian Empire. My father was a barber. I don't know where he learned his profession. He was very skilled and had quite a few clients. He owned a barber's shop, but he was the only one working there.

My parents were religious people and raised us accordingly. We spoke Yiddish at home, but we also spoke fluent Ukrainian and Russian. Every Friday my mother cooked for Sabbath. She baked challah in the Russian oven, made stuffed fish and boiled chicken. It wasn't allowed to cook or heat

food on Saturday. On Friday evening our family got together for a prayer. My mother lit candles and we sat down at the table for a Saturday meal. Our Ukrainian neighbor used to light our kerosene lamps and make fire in the stove on Saturdays in the winter. My father prayed at home on Sabbath and he read a chapter from the Torah to us, and then we had guests over. My father's cousins lived in Skvyra and so did my mother's brother Dudik before he moved to Kiev in the 1920s. They visited us with their wives and children. They all had big families. We had a lot of fun. We had tea, cookies and sponge cakes that my mother made. We sang Jewish songs, recited poems and danced. My parents had a record player and records with Jewish songs and dance music. We used to dance Jewish folk dances: sher, freilakhs and skotchna. We also got together at birthdays. My parents went to the synagogue on holidays.

My father wasn't recruited to the army because of his hernia. He took no interest in politics. Jews were enthusiastic about the revolution and had hopes for a better life. During the fights between the Red and White armies almost all stores in Skvira were closed, and people were trying to stay in their houses. After the revolution the stores opened again, and people returned to their daily routine. This lasted until the end of the NEP period in 1924 when the expropriation of people's property took place within a few weeks. The state took away all people's property: houses, stores, cattle, and so on. Jews from Skvira who had lost their property moved to bigger towns in search of jobs. There was a short period in 1924 when people were allowed to move to the US and Canada. My father's sister mailed an invitation to him from the US, but my father didn't want to leave his country. He loved his motherland.

My father died in 1956. We all got together in Skvira. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Skvira, according to Jewish rituals.