

Beila Gabis's Friends Yakov Aizner And His Sister Bella



My friend Yakov Aizner and his sister Bella. This photo was taken in Chernovtsy around 1938. They gave it to me for the memory when Yakov and his family left the ghetto in 1942.

[Beila met Yakov and became friends in the ghetto.] In July 1941 we were taken to the ghetto of Bershad: few streets were fenced with barbed wire. We stayed in our house. Life behind bars was terrible. In few weeks Romanian troops took command in the ghetto: our ghetto became a part of Transnistria.

One night we heard noise, yelling in Romanian and crying. Another group of Jews arrived at the ghetto. In the morning my mother saw light in my grandfather's window as if somebody was trying to light a candle. She went to the house and saw Jews sleeping side by side on the floor. It was cold

and they could well freeze to death in the house. My mother woke me up, boiled a big bucket of water and sent me to the house to give those people at least a cup of boiling water to warm up. I came into the house when I heard someone saying 'Look, she is so much like our Bella!' Then I met the Aizner family. Their daughter Bella died on the way to the ghetto. They were not even allowed to bury her. My mother invited them to stay with us and we became friends. Their son Yakov liked me a lot. His mother's name was Lisa, like my mother. She also liked me much. They told us that their family was rich, that they owned factories and plants in Romania and that they had relatives in America. They believed their relatives were going to rescue them through Red Cross. Aunt Lisa began to convince my mother and me to take me with them under a name of their daughter Bella and when we were free - marry Yakov. My mother told me to agree. In a month Red Cross couriers began to visit the ghetto. They had lists of Jews. They came to our house, wrote my name down as Yakov's sister and left. Yakov was handsome, but I wasn't particularly fond of him. Perhaps, I was too young and was afraid of the forthcoming marriage. Yakov began to work in the Jewish police. I've already mentioned that policemen made lists of people to go to work every day. They also decided who was to be sterilized and provided this 'material' to fascists. He could manage to not include me on any lists. He tried to save me from work. I think he helped me to avoid sterilization. Young girls and women got injections of formalin into uterus. It caused inflammation and high fever. Someone died, some survived, but could never have children.

On one hand, I was grateful to Yakov, but I didn't want to marry him. In about 3 months Yakov told me to be ready. A courier was coming to pick us up. I felt awfully sorry for my mother and my brothers. I thought I would never forgive myself if I survived and they didn't. When Yakov came I said that I loved my family and couldn't possibly leave them and that if he loved me why didn't he stay in the ghetto himself. He came back with his bag and said he would stay. His mother came. She begged me to either go with them or at least tell her son to come with his parents. I promised her I would do it. I told Yakov that I would never marry him. He left me and I went hysterical. My mother was very upset. She hoped that I might escape from that Hell where we were. In two days the Aizners knocked on our window at 6 in the morning - they were leaving the ghetto. My mother went outside to say 'good bye' to them, but I didn't dare.