

## Irina Lopko's Father David Mindel



My father David Mindel in Moscow where my father came in 1923, but he couldn't find a job and returned to Nezhin. He sent this photo to my mother so that she didn't forget him.

In 1919, when my grandmother on father's side Masia was 40 years old, my grandfather's brother Haim Isif Mindel came from the front of the Civil War. He had typhoid. She isolated him from her family and shut herself in a room with him to nurse him. She brought him to recovery and died saving her husband and children's lives. My grandmother adored her husband who sat there hitting his hammer while she was the breadwinner. She gave birth to eight children: three daughters and five sons, whom she was very proud of and adored them. My father David Mindel, born in 1901, was the oldest of his brothers. My grandfather was very religious and was to remarry according to the rules. Four months later a shadkhan sent him to another town where he met a Jewish woman, a widow with four children. Her name was Miriam. She was big and beautiful. She suffered from diabetes. The children got along well and we all loved her. We called her 'grandmother' and she loved us, too. Only my father was devoted to his mother. It upset him that she slept in his mother's bed and he also saw her wearing his mother's shawls. Everything she said or did exasperated him. In 1919, when my father turned 18 he overtook responsibility for the family. My father joined his Lempert uncles' business.

In his big family my father David always had a deciding word since he was the oldest son. My father was well shaped and strong. When a circus came on tour into the town my father's relatives tried to persuade my father to stay aside from its performances. My father gave his word, dressed up and went to the circus. When wrestlers came onto the stage and invited volunteers from the audience to take part in their performance the audience began to call 'David! David!' and my

father went onto the stage against his relatives' objections. He often won. My father used to say that he had an incomplete lower education. He was a cattle driver since childhood and he even had a certificate of 'cattle driver'. Later he became a cab driver when he met my mother.