

Asia Matveyuk's Mother Ethel Leikind



This is my dear mother Ethel Leikind (nee Levit). This photo was taken on her birthday in Nikolaev in 1923. This is the only existing photo of my mother. This is how I remember her. I have always had this photograph with me wherever I went. It was with me at the front during the Great Patriotic War.

My mother Ethel Levit was born in 1898 in Novopoltavka village. She was raised religious and studied at home with a melamed. She also finished three years in a Jewish school. My mother's family was wealthier than my father's. Her father bought her a Singer (German spelling) sewing machine, and my mother learned to sew well. She was born a beauty and had a talent of modeling and making beautiful outfits. She was a success with her clients. In due time my mother began to make clothes for Nikolaev actors. She made special and unique clothes. She went to Nikolaev for a few weeks to do her job once in three-four months.

My father knew my mother since childhood and before going to the czarist army he got her acceptance of his proposal to get married. However, their parents didn't give their consent to this marriage. My mother was not the oldest daughter in the family and had to wait until her older sister got married. My parents got married in 1918, shortly after my mother sister Rokhel-Leika's wedding. Although my father wasn't religious any longer and spoke against any religious traditions, to be able to marry his beloved girl he had to observe all Jewish religious wedding traditions. They had a chuppah at the synagogue according to the rules. However, there was no big wedding party since it was a hard period of life shortly after the revolution, the power shuffled from one group to another resulting in destitution, pogroms and hunger.

I was born in March 1919. I was named Asia for the first letter in my name was the same as in the name of my father's brother Arkadiy who had perished during a pogrom. Two years later my younger brother Tulia was born. In 1924 my mother got pregnant again, but she had an abortion made in the Red Cross hospital in Nikolaev. The abortion didn't go well and my mother got some infection. She was brought home severely ill and having a brain inflammation. I remember her crying of pain, and everybody around crying of sympathy and sorrow. This happened in January 1924. I remember somebody baking a few apples for my mother. Our neighbor brought them. I remember how I burst into tears because they gave those apples to my mother and I didn't quite understand what was going on around. My mother was taken to a hospital in Nikolaev where she died. My father gave some money to an attendant in the morgue to take my mother away from there without autopsy that was not allowed by Jewish laws. Our relatives blamed my father that he allowed my mother to have this abortion forbidden by the Jewish religion. Grandfather Solomon didn't even want to talk to my father for many years. My brother and I stayed with my paternal grandfather and grandmother during the funeral.