

Anna Kabakovà



This is my mother, Anna Kabakovà. The snapshot was made in Moscow in 1972.

My mother was born in Minsk in 1897. My maternal grandfather's name was Haim Pelix. He was involved in timbering. He owned plots in the forest. Haim managed his business so well, that he finally got rich. He was able to get all his children educated. Mother had 2 brothers Jacob Pelix, Solomon Pelix and sister Esfir' Pelix. Mother Anna Pelix studied at conservatoire in Saint Petersburg. She had a good voice. Her siblings studied in Lausanne, Switzerland. For a Jew to study in conservatoire at that time, it was necessary to have a wonderful voice as well as wealthy parents who would be able to pay tuition. Mother's family was one of the richest in Minsk.

My parents got married in 1919 in Minsk. Daughter Sofia was born in 1920. She died soon. Then they moved to Leningrad. Father was an officer, i.e. performing office functions. Father had a hard life. He was declared peoples' enemy and imprisoned in 1929 being charged with bourgeois views. He was exiled to Solovetskiye Islands [about 1000 km. to the north from Moscow]. He got off with that pretty easily and was released in 1932. His incarceration in GULAG left an imprint on his further life. Father was broken down. That year 1932 he left mother and married another woman. He was still thinking of mom and he loved me very much. It is hard to say who had a bigger influence on me. Both of my parents equally took part in my raising. After divorce, father was very tender and affectionate to me. Moreover, I spent most of my childhood with father.

Mother was very gifted. She had a wonderful voice and did well in conservatoire. Mother lost her voice and could not continue singing after the death of my little elder sister, who died in 1921 at the age of 1. Later on mother was a director of the kindergarden. She was very impulsive and she lost her temper if someone was getting on her nerves. I think very many people of her generation were like that because there was a lot they had to go through. Nevertheless, she loved life and fun. She was a merry-maker. There were a lot of people around her who were willing to laugh, dance and sing. She was always in the highlight of the company. She knew a lot of jokes and was good at cracking them. She was a bright person. She loved her kin. During WWII mother had been evacuated in some small town in Siberia. Unfortunately, I do not remember its name.

My mother lived by herself in her apartment, where we used to live before war. During some period of time she worked in the kindergarten as a minder. In the early 1950s she retired and raised my kids. They often stayed with grandmother on the weekend. During the week she met them at school, took them home and helped them with their homework. She died in Moscow in 1974. She had a severe form of cancer. She was buried in Vostryakovskoye cemetery.

My parents came of traditional Jewish families, but they were rather liberal in mind. They belonged to such type of Jews, who wanted to escape from Jewry and patriarchal principles of the past. It was not rare at that time. Though, as the experience showed, they were not able to do as they wished. They remained Jews subconsciously. Having denied religion and Jewry in the years of adolescence, my parents at a mature age came back to Jewry and started thinking of God. Father being over the hill, at the age of 70 started to go to the synagogue and fast on Yom-Kippur. Mother also took an interest in religion. I remember her cry when she was listening to Hatikvah.