

Bluma Katz With Her Mother Golda Katz



This is me photographed with my mother Golda Katz before my departure to study in Kharkov after finishing school. My mother had one photo and I took one with me. This photo was taken in Mogilyov-Podolskiy in 1940.

In 1928 I went to the 7-year Jewish school in Ozarintsy where we studied in Yiddish. I had excellent marks in all subjects at school. I studied 3 years in Ozarintsy. In autumn 1931 my father was offered a job of director of the MTS [equipment maintenance yard - they repaired plant and equipment for kolkhozes in Vinnitsa region] canteen in Vendichany village near Ozarintsy. They promised him a higher salary and lodging. My parents decided to move there. Jews constituted maximum 30% of the total population in Vendichany. Many women in Vendichany went to work. Mama began to make bed sheets at home. Her clients paid her with food products or money. We were rather wealthy at the time.

I went to the 7-year Ukrainian school in Vendichany. There were quite a few Jewish students at school. There was no anti-Semitism - perhaps it did not exist before the war. I had Jewish and Ukrainian friends. We were taught to be internationalists at school. Nationality didn't matter to me. We were told that we had one nationality - we were Soviet people. I became a pioneer, and was very proud wearing my red neck tie. After finishing school my parents began to think about my further studies. They wanted me to enter a college which required a full secondary education. There was no place to continue education in Vendichany while there were higher secondary schools in Mogilyov-Podolskiy. My father went to Mogilyov-Podolskiy, found a job and our family moved to Mogilyov-Podolskiy. My parents bought a small shabby house in the center of the town. We certainly lived in better houses in Ozarintsy and Vendichany than the one we had in Mogilyov-Podolskiy. However, my parents believed it was more important for their children to get education than concentrate on certain discomforts. I went to the 8th form of a Russian school. I studied well. I liked school and only had good and excellent marks for my studies. In the 8th form I joined the Komsomol.

We spoke Yiddish at home as we were used to, and Ukrainian to our Ukrainian neighbors. We celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays like we did when living in Ozarintsy. My father brought matzah for Pesach from Mogilyov-Podolskiy. My parents fasted on Yom Kippur. We could not celebrate Sabbath following all rules, but mama lit candles on Friday evening, we prayed and had dinner. My father had to go to work on Saturday. Mama didn't sew on Saturday. There was no anti-Semitism in the Mogilyov-Podolskiy. We got along well with Ukrainians,. I remember that on Easter our Ukrainian neighbor brought us Easter bread and painted eggs and mama gave her family matzah on Pesach. People respected each other's religion and traditions.

I finished school in 1940. I wanted to study foreign languages and become a translator. My mother's distant relative Yekaterina Spiegelman, who lived in Kharkov had graduated from the Philological Faculty of Kharkov University and worked in a publishing house.