

Rachel Averbukh



In this photo I am 2 years old. I'm wearing shoes that my father made for me. I'm 87 now, and don't remember anything about having the picture taken.

I was born in 1915 in Pskov. I was the sole and favorite child in the family -- two twin boys died before I was born. From childhood I had a teacher from the synagogue in Pskov, who came to our home and taught me to read and write.

But he was an elderly man, and I didn't like those lessons. I wanted to play, not study. For toys, I had one favorite knitted doll and a wonderful porcelain tea set for dolls. We had a grand piano at home, and I began to study piano when I was just a little girl.

In Pskov we lived in Arkhangelskaya Street. It was just a common unpaved street, along which there were wooden and brick houses where ordinary people lived. Our house had the usual furnishing -- wooden tables, buffets. Mom had a sewing machine, too, which she used often. Mom gave me the job of setting the table for dinner.

Every day I would cover the dining room table with a beautiful table cloth. Then I would ask Mom, what sort of dinner are we going to have today - dairy or meat? According to her answer I put out the right dishes.

Mom and Dad always and without fail prayed before meals. They would wash their hands, wash them in a bowl, and then rinse them with water from a jug three times on each side. They pronounced the blessing for the meal: "Borukh ato adoinei eloheinu..."

After dinner the housemaid cleared the table and washed the dishes. I remember that Mom wouldn't leave the kitchen -- she lost a part of her beauty in that kitchen! She did not trust the Russian housemaid - she was constantly afraid that she would break the rules of kashrut.

We didn't hire Jewish housemaids, only Russian ones. I remember that apart of them, a laundress came to the house, and even a seamstress.

The laundress would wash our linen in our wash tub. Mom would tell me, "Rochole, take a tub and look how Darya washes, and wash your dolls' dresses and your kerchiefs." The seamstress sewed all sorts of pants, shirts, underwear and linen for our family.