

Boris Girshov And His Cousin



This photograph was taken in Usvyaty in 1939. It shows me and my cousin Naum.

Musicians from the Leningrad Conservatoire used to come to Usvyaty to spend summer vacations. I often stood near the windows of their houses and listened to professional musicians playing the violin or the piano. It was interesting for me.

I remember that one day my father got acquainted with a Conservatoire teacher and brought me to his place for trial. I played some pieces, he advanced several remarks and said that I was not yet ready to study at a conservatoire. He also gave me some recommendations regarding my musical studies.

My school friends were both Jews and Russians. After school together with classmates we used to go to the cinema, discussed films, went to skating rinks, dancing (in senior classes we danced foxtrot, Cracovienne, waltz, etc.).

I was an athlete, I went in for gymnastics. When I arrived in Leningrad, I took part in competitions and got 1st sports category. At school we were trained by our PT teacher after school. I also was interested both in football and volleyball.

But gymnastics was my favorite kind of sport. Once in Usvyaty I appeared on the theater stage and performed exercises on horizontal bar. I was a Komsomol member.

At school we had a musical orchestra, which I participated in. Sometimes I even was in the driving seat, because I was more advanced in music than other children.

I was brought up in the Soviet spirit and could not imagine another order of things.

I never spent vacations in pioneer camps. I spent it at home, sometimes visited relatives in Leningrad. In summer I used to gather mushrooms and berries in the wood.

I remember that I saw a motorcycle and a car for the first time in my life in Usvyaty. We ran following it. It happened when I was a pupil of primary school. Later big lorries appeared in our small town. Only big brass came to our town by cars.

My first trip by car happened when I went from Usvyaty to Nevel (to the railway station). Earlier people went there by horse (about 40 km). My trip by car happened in 1935-1936.

The same year I went by train (for the first time in my life) to Leningrad, being a schoolboy. We went there on vacation to watch theater performances and visit museums.

According to historical data Usvyaty settlement was regularly demolished during different battles. The last war destroyed almost all its houses, including that of mine. Orthodox church, a fine sample of architecture was ruined.

Only the central square with several houses (shops) on it and a two-storied white house (a manor) remained safe. That manor housed our school.

At present a Memorial in honor of battles of the Great Patriotic War is situated there.