

# Asia Matveyuk's Adoptive Mother Freida Leikind



My adoptive mother Freida. This photo was taken in Nikolaev approximately in 1939. On this day Freida whom I called 'Mama' and I took a long walk in the town choosing gifts for her and my father and I convinced her to have this photo taken for the memory. I was to go to continue my studies in the Lugansk Medical School and I wanted to take Freida's picture with me. I've always had this photo with me along with my mother's picture.

My mother died in 1924. A year later my father married my grandmother's niece Freida. Her father Ruvim Grinker was grandmother Zisel's stepbrother. Freida's first husband Abram Girshel' died. She had a son named Samuel. He was the same age with me. My father and Freida registered their marriage in 1925. They didn't have a Jewish wedding. We moved in with Freida with our father.

In 1927 Freida gave birth to a girl named Braina after Freida's deceased mother. Freida was a kind and nice woman and never distinguished between her own children and her stepchildren and I began to call her 'mama'. My father like many other representatives of poor Jewish families he got fond of revolutionary ideas and dreams about a better life and construction of a communist society. I cannot say what particularly had this effect on my father: it might have been the communist propaganda thrust on soldiers. My father stopped going to the synagogue, joined Komsomol, and became the leader of the village poor. Freida was raised in a religious family, but my father forbade her to observe Jewish traditions or celebrate holidays.

In 1941 fascists raped all young girls who came to the village on vacation. They taunted them and made them walk across the village. They raped my sister Braina who had just finished the 8th form in 1941 before mother Freida's eyes. They beat the girls to death. My stepmother lost her mind. Fascists locked her in the basement of the village shop where she died. They tied ropes around her dead body and dragged her across the village. The rest of Jews were taken to the outskirts of the village where they were ordered to dig two pits. They shot and threw children into one pit and adults - into another.