

Alexander Mussels's Relatives



This photo was taken without me in 1960 in Zarasay, however, it is very dear to me. My father Isaih (Shaya) Girshevich Mussel is first from the left. Polina, my cousin Moisey Mussel's wife is next to him. Next stands Mara, my cousin's daughter. Yakov, my cousin, stands first from the right. The man in a beret, second from the right, is my cousin Moisey and my sister Chasya stands closest to the monument.

My forefathers both on my father's and mother's sides lived in the Baltic Sea region, in Lithuania, in the town of Zarasay. In those times the town was named Novoaleksandrovsk, later it was renamed Zarasay. I have never seen any of my grandmothers or grandfathers, as they lived abroad and I

was born in the Soviet Union. We had no opportunity to see them, because trips abroad were not allowed. For us Lithuania was behind the Iron Curtain.’ We received pieces of news very rarely, so we really did not know anything about my grandparents.

I remember very little. However, Father spoke very highly of his parents. His mother Chaya Sarah Mussel died before her husband, before the war. She was a very kind woman, cooked national Jewish meals and together with her husband, Tsvi, observed all Jewish traditions. Grandpa Tsvi Girsh worked very hard in order to support his family. I don’t know for sure, if my grandpa died before the war in 1941, or if Fascists murdered him. In any case, he perished in 1941. I found out about the following event from my cousin Moisey. He told me that almost the entire population of Zarasay, about 8,000 people, were told to assemble. They were mostly Jews and mostly old people and children. The Fascists forced them to walk to the forest on foot. The forest was several kilometers away from Zarasay. They dug ditches – they were forced to do it themselves – and after that they were all executed by shooting and dumped into these ditches.

I was at that place in 1960. There is an obelisk now and 100 meters to the left and to the right you can see hillocks, where the victims were buried. This place required special care. When I was there I tidied the territory a little bit. We witnessed a horrible thing happening there: some people tried to dig up these trenches looking for valuables. I had a meeting with the secretary of the Communist Party District Committee, and we agreed that this place had to be covered with concrete. It was done later.