

Golda Gutner , And Her Father, Osher Gurevich



I, Golda Gutner , and my father, Osher Gurevich. 1926; Konotop.

My father said that his ancestors came from Austro-Hungary. His grandfather was a rabbi (I don't know his name). He was somebody special - he was buried in a crypt, with a lamp always burning in it. That rabbi had three sons. One of them was my grandfather, Ele Gurevich. His brothers came to visit us from Kharkov in 1920-s. I was named in honor of father's grandmother. My mother said that my great-grandmother Golda came to visit us too. She liked to drink tea very much, so she

always carried her own kettle with her and asked people to boil tea for her only in this kettle. As she was drinking tea, she always said in Yiddish, "Grandmother Golda loves tea". Grandfather Ele Gurevich was a watchmaker, and his wife, grandmother Sima - a housewife.

I also remember there was a holiday when a chicken was rotated over head. Mother would give us all chickens, then she would put them in a basket and I went through the town to shoichet (Jewish butcher). Mother told me how a chicken's head should be put under the wing so that there would be no blood. She trusted me with money to pay the shoichet, even though I was only ten years old. But we were very independent at that age; mother taught us to do everything: clean the flat, wash windows (every ten days), clean the dust, and wash every leaf of the plants we grew (she liked them). We baked bread every week. She bolted flour and made dough, and I had to knead dough with my fists. I once asked her, "How long should I be doing this?" and my mother answered, "Until beads of sweat appear in the other corner of the room. Every Friday we did a major cleaning of the house. Mother was a housewife. She only hired a babysitter when she gave birth to two twins. When I was born there was no babysitter. There were no water pipes, and when we had to wash we brought water from the well. In summer we carried water ourselves, but in winter we hired a special man. In winter we washed clothes in the river in ice-holes. We carried things on slides. We always were clean. We also washed in bath once a week.

After my father's death in 1957, we took mother from Konotop to Kiev. First she lived with the sister, then with me.

At home we spoke only Yiddish before the war. My brother even went to cheder before the revolution. When I was young, there were Jewish schools in Konotop, but I went to a Russian school (even though most of the students in my class were Jewish). I finished 7 classes. I also learned music for 6 years (parents bought a piano from our neighbor). After school I finished a one-year accountancy school and since 1932 I was working as an accountant in a flax-storing company.