

Vladimir Khalfin's Sister Clara Khalfina And Brother Itzyk Khalfin



This is my older sister Clara Khalfina and my brother Itzyk Khalfin photographed on my sister's 11th birthday. The photo was taken in Luchinets in 1938.

In 1927 my older sister Clara was born. My mother was pregnant with Itzyk when my father went fishing and never came back. My younger brother Itzyk was born in 1934. My brother and I were circumcised as required by Jewish tradition. As father wanted, Itzyk was named after a distant relative of his. My mother was alone with three children and the chairman of the collective farm suggested that she sent my sister and me to a children's house to be able to raise our baby brother. But my mother refused by saying that Jews never gave up their children however hard life might treat them.

We spoke Yiddish in the family. When my sister turned 8 she went to the Jewish school. I went to the same school in 1936. We studied all subjects in Yiddish. We had classes in Jewish history and general subjects. There were not many children in the Jewish school since many Jewish families preferred to send their children to Ukrainian school. There was a 5-year Jewish school and after finishing it children had to continue studies in a Ukrainian school. We also had to continue education in the Ukrainian lower secondary school. Besides, all higher educational institutions were Ukrainian or Russian and it was easier for Jewish children to have knowledge of these languages if they studied in Ukrainian or Russian schools.

In the first half of July 1941 the central area of Luchinets where Jews resided was fenced with barbed wire. We were told that the area fenced with barbed wire was a Jewish ghetto and that we were not allowed to leave it. We stayed in our house. It's hard to say how many inmates of the ghetto survived, but I know there weren't many survivors. Fortunately, my mother, my brother and sister and I survived.

After the WWII my sister Clara went to work at the same shop where our mother was working in Chernovtsy. She also studied at the accounting school in the evenings. In 1948 she married a Jewish man Aron, but I don't remember his last name. He moved to Chernovtsy after the war. He was an accountant at a plant. He came to Chernovtsy in 1944 and managed to find an apartment. My sister moved in with her husband. My mother and brother moved with her. After finishing the accounting school my sister went to work at the accounting office of the mechanic plant.

My brother Itzyk tried to make a career. This was the period of state anti-Semitism and Ukrainian authorities preferred to appoint Ukrainians to higher positions. My brother was an economist at a plant and wanted to get another job at a research institute, at the human resources department. He wasn't rejected or accepted, but every time he went there they were telling him to come another time. He wasn't told that he couldn't be employed due to his Jewish nationality, but it was clear that the reason was there. My brother had the feeling of being hurt for the rest of his life. My brother was married to a Jewish woman from Chernovtsy. They had a civil marriage. In 1960 their son was born. My brother wasn't religious and his family didn't observe any Jewish traditions. However, they had their son circumcised. My brother, my sister, their families and I usually met on holidays - birthdays or wedding anniversaries - when we visited our mother. Itzyk died of infarction in Chernovtsy in 1982.