

Sally Uzvalova With Her Family



From left to right, sitting: my mother Tonia Barzak, nee Roitberg; she's holding my one-year-old son Boris Uzvalov; my uncle Leon, my father's brother and companion. My father and Leon were arrested in 1940 and sent to Solikamsk, Molotov region in Siberia. Standing: I, Sally Uzvalova, nee Barzak, and my husband Jacob Uzvalov. Photo made in Chernovtsy in 1952 on the occasion of uncle Leon's arrival.

In May 1945 the war was over. People told my mother that she could move to Rumania. The borders were open and many people left for Rumania. Me and my mother and brother arrived in Chernovtsy on October 1945 to move to Rumania from there. But right before our departure the border was closed. We were offered to cross the border illegally for some fee, but we didn't have money and feared the Soviet power much. We didn't take the risk of finding ourselves in Siberia instead of Rumania and settled down in Chernovtsy. I began fighting for our survival. We rented a small room in an old Jewish neighborhood. I got a job of assistant accountant at a canteen. I was allowed to have a bowl of soup and take two home, for my work. Later I went to work as an accountant at the textile factory and the three of us could move to the hostel of the factory. There was a big wooden trestle bed in the middle of our room with straw on it. My mother and I slept on the sides and my brother slept between us. There was terrible famine in Chernovtsy in 1945-46. When I managed to get a glass of flour we added a spoon of flour to a glass of boiling water sprinkling it with salt and that was our meal. My co-employees felt sorry for me. Once I got 3 m of cheap fabric for jerky sweaters. I sold it to villagers or exchanged for food. My brother went to the first form. He was growing up fast and was always hungry.

We didn't observe any Jewish traditions after the war. My cousins that went to Siberia and we were afraid of going to synagogue or celebrating Shabbat and Jewish holidays at home. Like weaning a baby from breastfeeding everything Jewish was cut away from us. The only thing that stayed with us was our language. During the Soviet power there were people in Chernovtsy that got together in secret to pray. Only old people that had nothing to fear went to the synagogue. This fear of the Soviet power was with us for a lifetime. My mother always went to the other side of the street when she saw a militiaman. She was always afraid of hearing someone knocking on the door. Although

she was good at languages she failed to learn Russian - I guess it was because of her fear. She lived until the end of her life knowing that the Soviet power put an end to everything good that she had in life.

In 1949 I got married. My co-employee, foreman at the factory, introduced me to my future husband. When he told me that a friend of his wanted to meet me I asked him whether he was a Jewish man. I couldn't ever imagine even dating a non-Jewish man. I was a very shy girl. My mother continuously repeated to me that the only dowry I had was my honor. My future husband's name was Jacob Uzvalov. On 30 April 1949 we got married. We just had a civil ceremony in the district registry office. We didn't have a wedding party, because we were so poor. After our wedding I moved in with Jacob. His mother was very kind to me and I came to liking this plain kind woman. Molka was a religious woman. She observed all Jewish traditions and celebrated Shabbat and all Jewish holidays. I joined her and felt like coming back to my happy blissful childhood. We couldn't always afford a chicken and Gefilte fish on holiday, but there was always matsah at Pesach. My mother-in-law made it herself. We didn't go to synagogue, because my husband was a communist and at best it might result in his having to quit the party. Molka had a book of prayers and we prayed at home.

When I got pregnant my husband got scared. We were very poor and he tried to convince me that we couldn't afford a baby. Molka felt that there was something wrong. She interfered and thanks to her interference I had a son born on 6 June 1951. We named him Boris after my father. We lived from hand to mouth. I didn't have diapers and wrapped my son in newspapers. My mother-in-law was very happy to have a grandson. My husband was afraid of having his son circumcised. My mother thought it was all right, but my mother-in-law insisted on circumcision. Her son said to her "Mother, do you want me to go to jail?" Yes, we were living in constant fear. Regretfully, Molka didn't see her grandson growing. The next year at Pesach she was making matsah. It was hot and her blood pressure got higher, but she didn't stop her work. Molka had a stroke. She died on the first day of Pesach in a week's time in 1952. I insisted that she was buried at the Jewish cemetery, but my husband was afraid of it.