

Dobrina Rivkind's Maternal Aunt Khana Khodek On Gulf Of Finland



This photo was taken in Leningrad in summer 1934. This is my maternal aunt Khana Khodek on Gulf of Finland. She is striking a joking pose atop a rock, waving her kerchief, and far behind her you can see a ship sailing.

My mother's family was very poor. Grandfather Vulf Khodek worked for a container seller and earned very little. Grandmother's name was Tsylya Khodek, nee Rukhman. She did not work and took care of the family. There were four children in the family: three girls and one boy. All four were born in Vitebsk. Mother was the eldest, her name was Pesya, she was born in 1899 and died at the age of 95 in 1994. Her sisters' names were Khana (1907 - 1993), Lilya (Liya) (1908 - 1954), and brother's name was Lev (1904 - 1942). There were also other children in the family but they died at a very young age.

Later, about 1897, they moved to Vitebsk. They lived near Vitebsk before in Smolyany shtetle. According to the family, they had a small house there, with a small garden full of flowers, because they had three daughters, who loved flowers very much. Certainly, there were no servants in the household they had to do everything on their own. Grandmother was very strict and demanding. Everybody had their own tasks. My mother Pesya was the eldest in the family and she had to drag the washing to the river, to wash and take care of the small children. All the rest had various tasks depending on the time of the year: someone was responsible for watering the plant in the garden in summer and washed the floor in the house, when winter came; the other one helped mother to clean the house, and another one helped to mend the clothes. But the house was very clean. However, in spite of poverty, grandparents tried to provide their children with some education. I remember they even had some teacher, who came to the house and taught children minimal literacy: to read, write and count. Later mother with her friends attended some courses, which were called "likbez" in those days ["liquidation of illiteracy"], which provided her with knowledge, equal to 7-year educational course. The brother did not get more education than the sisters, he was

taught as much as they were.

After the Revolution in 1917, they did not participate in the Revolution, it did not even affect them, they sold the small house where they lived, left Vitebsk and moved to Petrograd, now St. Petersburg. Khana finished a musical school and worked as a teacher of chorus singing in various musical schools. She had no family of her own, she was never married. As a young girl she had a relationship with a man she loved very much, but he was married and did not wish to leave his family, so they parted; and after that Khana did not want to marry anybody but to live alone. During the siege of Leningrad at the World War II she stayed in the city and worked in a kindergarten as an educator, helping children as much as she could. My mother and Khana were very good friends, so they spent much time together, and Khana celebrated most of the holidays together with their family. She also loved going to Leningrad Philharmony and Opera Theatre; in summer she liked to make trips and cruises on Volga and Kama [big Russian rivers]. Khana was always very trendy, she liked wearing good clothes and looking great and she was a good tailor herself. She died in Saint-Petersburg in 1993.