

Berta Kotina



This is my mother Berta Kotina. I took a picture of my mother in her room when she moved to my sister. Nobody could think that mother would die in half a year. The picture was taken in Moscow in 1960.

My mother Basya Laskina was born in 1893 in Bendery, Bessarabia. Mother did not tell anything about her childhood and youth. I only know that she graduated from lyceum and went to Odessa to study before revolution. No matter what nationality a lady was it was hard for her to acquire a higher education. Mother took courses of dentist assistants.

After finishing studies she went to Moscow to her brother Kopl. He lived in the communal apartment of the former tenancy of the rich people. The hosts must have been either shot or died in the camp and several families moved in a large 7-room apartment. My mother also moved in there. Uncle Kopl made arrangements for mother to move in that apartment. Our family had stayed there by the middle 1970s.

My parents met in Moscow. Father was the university student and mother was a dentist assistant after moving to Moscow. I do not know exactly where they met. I assumed it was some sort of a party. Soon they got married. Neither father nor mother observed Jewish traditions, so they had an ordinary wedding - just registered their marriage in the state registration office and a family party in the evening. It was impossible to have a big wedding since the times were hard. After getting married they moved to mother's room. After graduation father got a mandatory job assignment in the town Shenkursk, Arkhangelsk oblast [800 km to the North-East from Moscow]. Mother went with him. There in 1921 my sister Rita was born. She had lived there only for 3 years. When Rita got ill, mother took her to Moscow hoping that the doctors in the capital were better and would

cure her. However, Rita died in 1924 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery. Now that cemetery does not exist. There is a hotel called Ukraine built on that place. In the year of 1924 father, who was specialized in phthisiology was transferred to tuberculosis sanatorium of Crimean city Yalta, [now the Crimea Republic, Ukraine, 900 km from Kiev]. I was born in Yalta in 1925. We had lived in Yalta for 2 years and father was offered a job in the sanatorium not far from Moscow to work as phthisiatrician and part-time rontgenologist. We came back to Moscow. Father lived in the sanatorium and mother lived with me in our room in Moscow. She came to Moscow on weekends. We spent the whole summer in the sanatorium. In 1929 my younger sister Ella was born.

Then they wanted to conceal something from us they used to speak Yiddish. When we came to grandmother Hana-Mera both of my parents spoke Yiddish with her. There was a Jewish theatre in Moscow at that time and parents attended all performances. I did not know Yiddish, so parents did not take me there. We did not mark Jewish holidays at home. When I was a child my parents and I went to grandmother Hana-Mera on major Jewish holidays. She marked Jewish holidays.

Upon return to Moscow mother enrolled on secretary's courses. She learned typing and short-hand. Having finished courses she got the assignment to work as a secretary for the director of the tulle and lace factory.

After the WWII my father was offered a job in the tuberculosis hospital in a small town out of Moscow, Zvenigorod. He was the deputy chief physician, mother was a housewife. Parents lived by themselves. They were dependable. My sister Ella exchanged her apartment for a bigger one in late 1970s. They settled in Biryulevo, the outskirt of Moscow. It was very far from our previous place. Probably they should not move. Mother died in 1980, and father died in a half a yea. We buried them on the common cemetery. The funeral was secular as none of the parents was religious.