

## Sarra Nikiforenko



I, Sarra Nikiforenko (nee Zelyonaya), graduate of Food College. The photo was taken in Smela in 1930.

After finishing school in 1926 I entered the College of Food Industry in our town. Most of the students were Jewish. Jewish young people were eager to get a good education. I was to become a lab assistant for sugar industry. I was a painstaking student.

I was very fond of singing. My friends and I used to go to the bank of Tismin River where we sang Russian and Ukrainian songs, but mostly Yiddish, of course.

Once during a party where I sang Ukrainian and Jewish songs a young man approached me. He was Vitaliy Nikiforenko. He was a student of the Institute of Food Industry in Kiev. He was on vacation in his hometown visiting his parents. He went to take me home. He was looking at me with admiring eyes. I had never had a non-Jewish friend before and I was concerned a little bit. I avoided him at the beginning. I didn't want to date with him. He came to see my sister Sonia and said 'If you don't tell Sarra to come to see me I will go to the river and drown myself'. Sonia got scared, ran to me and said 'Here came your sweetheart'. Boris, my brother, said 'Give him a stick and let him beat this kind of ideas out of his head'. I had to go see him and say 'Don't be stupid'. To make the long story short we were destined to be together. I have no regrets about it.

We saw each other for a year. I finished College and Vitaliy graduated from the Institute in 1930. He wrote me nice letters. Upon graduation Vitaliy got a job at the sugar factory in Smela. We had our wedding registered at registration office. We had a wedding party in my parents' garden, but it was a Soviet wedding without a chuppah or any other Jewish rituals. There were Ukrainian and Jewish relatives and guests at the wedding. They shouted 'Gorko!' [Russian for 'bitter' - a Russian tradition] to us. Jewish young people that left their families stopped observing traditions. We believed in new socialist life and thought that Jewish traditions belonged to the past. We thought we were more advanced than older people and had to look into the future.