

Riva Pizman's Mother Golda Gershberg



This is my mother Golda Gershberg in this photo. Mama was photographed for the family album at the request of my brothers. This photo was taken in Mogilyov-Podolskiy in 1937.

Mama was born in 1891. I don't know what kind of education mama, her sisters or brothers got. Mama could read a write a little, but I don't know how she learned it. My grandfather taught his daughters his profession. My grandmother and grandfather died in the early 1900s, when my mama and her younger brother were still in their teens. My mother's older brother and sisters raised the younger children.

My mother became independent at an early age. In the early 1900s some distant relative of hers died and left her little store to my mother. Perhaps, she felt sorry for the orphan girl and wanted to help her. Whatever it was, my mother became the owner of this store. She purchased and sold everyday goods: matches, kerosene, needles, soap, etc. After the revolution my mother's store was expropriated. This was when mama began sewing at home. She altered old clothes and did it so well that everybody believed the thing was brand new. She had her clients: at first poorer women , but later she got wealthier clients, who liked her sewing.

I don't know how my parents met, but they got married in 1918. They had a Jewish wedding with a chuppah, a rabbi and many guests. At the height of the wedding party the Petlura soldiers broke into the house. Mama was very pretty, and in her wedding outfit she looked strikingly beautiful. The bandits feasted their eyes upon her and said it was sinful to spoil the wedding for such bride. They were served some vodka, which they drank and left the wedding. Of course, this was an exceptional case since usually the Petlura gangs left a bloody trace behind them. My parents became atheists after the revolution. They observed no Jewish traditions. Their marriage was their

last tribute to traditions, and they gave it for the sake of their relatives, rather than for themselves.

After the wedding my parents rented a little house where all four children were born. There were 2 little rooms and a kitchen in the house. It was heated with a Russian stove located in the kitchen. Mama cooked on this stove as well. Papa was a cabinetmaker and made whatever plain furniture we had. Papa also made plank beds for us. We were not wealthy. Mama was saving a part of her earning to buy a house. In 1933 my father fell severely ill. It all started from ordinary flu. He recovered, but then he went outside to chop some wood and caught cold since this happened in winter. My father fell ill with meningitis and shortly afterward he got paralyzed and never recovered. He could move around, but he could work no longer. His hands were shaking, and he could not hold any tool. My mama had to take over supporting our family of 6 people. Besides being a pretty woman, she also had a strong character, was a smart, honest and fair person. She raised her children kind, caring and devoted people. It helped us to survive through the hard times, particularly, the period of World War II. Mama worked from morning till night, and we could manage somehow. Mama altered our old clothes, and we had even better clothes than other boys and girls. We also had sufficient food. Mama also managed to involve my father in the life of the family: she let him go shopping to a nearby store. Father learned to talk, however illegibly, but we learned to understand him. Mama loved going to the cinema in the park near our house. She took us, children, and my father joined us to go to the cinema. Mama and papa also went to the theater every now and then. However busy mama was, she always found time to talk to Father and always asked his advice, even if she didn't follow it.

In 1936 my mother's dream came true. She bought a small 2-bedroom apartment in a 2-storied house in the Komsomolskaya Street in the suburb of the town. There were 4 apartments in this house. There were two small rooms, a fore room and a kitchen in the apartment. It was so good to have our own apartment!