

Faina Saushkina With Her Son Boris Saushkin



My son Boris and I, Faina Saushkina - Voronezh, 1936. My husband took this photo when our son was ill.

In the 7th form I became a Komsomol member without giving it much thought. All children were enthusiastic about membership in Komsomol - we believed our country to be the best in the world and wanted to contribute into its prosperity. Our family still had a hard time and after finishing school I went to look for a job. I was 17 years old. I began to work at a Jewish kindergarten. I enjoyed my work: I liked children and enjoyed teaching them Jewish songs, dances and poems. At leisure time my friends and I went to dancing parties and sang in a choir - we sang popular Jewish and Soviet songs. Once the district Komsomol committee sent us to a frontier unit in Slavuta where I met my future husband. We conducted meetings dedicated to memorable dates, recited poems and sang. Once our neighbor Manya Vinokur that lived in another half of our house came to our house. She told me that a guy wanted to meet me. He saw me several times during our performances at the frontier unit, but dared not to approach me.

Knowing strict morals of Jewish families this young man didn't know how to approach me. I told my parents that a military from the frontier unit wanted to be my friend and they invited him to our home. Manya brought this soldier to our house in the evening. He was a Russian guy with fair hair, blue eyes, handsome and strong. His name was Alexandr Savushkin. He served in the army in Slavuta. Alexandr was a cook in a canteen for soldiers.

Alexandr visited us every day. He courted me in his own particular way - he brought some food instead of flowers. 1934 was still a difficult year and soldiers got better food than we had. I liked him and met with him. My parents were not particularly happy about my friendship with a Russian man with no parents. My father didn't like it, but my mother liked Alexandr. She liked it that he cared about me. We met for a year. By the way, we were never left by ourselves. I went to parties at the military unit or Alexandr visited us and when we went for a walk in the town my sisters Sarah or Manya were always with me. In summer a group of young people and I went to a collective farm to help them with harvesting. Alexandr came there on a Sunday with a bag full of food.

In autumn 1934 Alexandr officially proposed to me. He came with flowers and asked my parents to give their consent to our marriage. My parents had no objections to our marriage - they saw that Sasha treated me nicely and that I was in love with him and didn't want to put any barriers on our way. At the beginning of 1935 we had a civil ceremony at the local registry office. I took my husband's last name and became Faina Savushkina. After the war when I was receiving a new passport I saw that they wrote my last name with one letter missing - Saushkina, but I left it at that. We had a wedding dinner with members of our family, Alexandr's friends from the military unit and our neighbor Manya that introduced us to one another. It was a small dinner party. Alexandr stayed with me overnight. We slept on my narrow bed and my sister Manya that shared the room with me went to sleep in our parents' bedroom. In the morning my husband went to the military unit. For some time Alexandr only came home on Saturday or when he got a leave and left for the military unit again. He began to observe some Jewish traditions with our family. He learned few prayers and enjoyed our celebrations at Shabbat or on holidays. On 30 March 1935 my husband's term of service was over. He demobilized and we began to prepare to departure to Voronezh where he came from. Soldiers and officers from the military unit where Alexandr served came to say "good bye" to us and wish us happiness. I didn't sleep the night before we left - I talked with my father and mother. They were very concerned about our departure and my father was afraid of letting me go away with a non-Jewish husband.

Alexandr's sister Ania met us in Voronezh. She was older than Alexandr. She lived in Voronezh with her husband. They didn't have children. They welcomed us with warmth and we moved in with them into their big room. My husband went to work as a locksmith at the same plant where he worked before he went to serve in the army.

On 7 October 1935 my son Boria was born. He was a nice boy only he was growing and developing so fast that doctors were even concerned about it. At 7 months he walked in his bed and smiled - he had a mouthful of teeth. My husband and I were very happy and Anna helped us to take care of our son. But Boria caught cold and died of pleurisy. Only thanks to my husband's love and warmth with which his sister treated me I began to come back to life after my son died.