

Haya Dernovskaya, Mira Derovskaya's Mother, With Friends



This is my mother Haya Dernovskaya [nee Etkina], still unmarried, with her Jewish friends. She is 17 here. The picture was taken in Porkhov's photo studio in 1916 in memory of the years of friendship.

My mother is the second from right sitting. Next to her are her friends Haya and Roza. Standing are Mum's other friends Riva (on the right) and Nadya (on the left).

Later they lost track of each other. Only in her advanced years did mother find Riva, who lived in Leningrad with her son. But, as both were elderly and sick, they could only talk on the phone, rather frequently though.

My mother Haya was tall and beautiful. In her youth she worked as a milliner. After marrying she became a housewife.

My parents lived in different cities before marrying, they were engaged to each other, but they hadn't met before the wedding.

The rabbi of Pskov knew both families very well. The wedding took place in Pskov in 1927. Afterwards the young couple moved to Leningrad and rented a room.

Mum was very skilful at cooking traditional Jewish meals. She prepared kosher food separately for herself and grandfather and non-kosher for Daddy and me. But we chose what was tastier, because only mother and granddad were Orthodox. Daddy and I didn't keep kosher, but liked delicious food.

On Jewish holidays relatives came to us. It was forbidden to celebrate any religious holidays then, but we had wonderful neighbors in our communal apartment, so we could rely on their keeping

silence. And they never let us down, though they were completely different people in regard to age, origin, educational level and culture, but all of them were decent people.

With the children of some of them I still keep friendly relations, for example, with our neighbor Lilya, granddaughter of an Orthodox priest who had his parish somewhere in Shuvalovo. He was put in prison in 1938 and perished somewhere in a camp.

Among our neighbors, only one was Jewish. It was the family of our friend, whose father managed to exchange with one of our other neighbors and move to our apartment. My parents were very amicable with this family.

On New Year holidays all neighbors had decorated New Year trees, but it wasn't a Jewish tradition to have one, so we never had a fir-tree.