

Mira Dernovskaya With Her Parents In Their Summer Cottage



This is an amateur photo of mother, father and me in our summer cottage near Novorzhev taken in 1933.

I am 3 and a half years old here. I was small, thin and looked younger than I was.

My parents got married in Pskov in 1927. Afterwards the young couple moved to Leningrad and rented a room. Before the war Daddy worked in a tailor's workshop, which was located in the building of the hostel of the Military Mechanical Institute.

All the teachers from this institute ordered clothes there, and supplied him with theatre tickets. Mum and Daddy were very fond of theater; they wouldn't miss a new play.

They also loved music and songs. Daddy bought a gramophone as soon as they appeared on sale. At home we had many records, including records of all the singers popular at that time.

I was prematurely born in 1929. Mum was hit in a shop with a bag full of potatoes. I 'regarded it as a signal to action' and was born before the time. I was small, thin, but, as it turned out, sturdy. Until I reached school age, I was brought up by Mum.

In August 1931 my brother Abram was born, he was a wonderful boy. He died in a tragic accident. When he was 1 year and 4 months old, he poisoned himself with undiluted acetic acid. It happened early in the morning. Everyone was at home.

We lived in a communal apartment. The bottle full of vinegar stood on the kitchen table. He had drunk it all in front of everybody, and I, a three-year old, stood there and repeated: 'Abrashka, don't touch it!'

Mum was sick for a very long time after that misfortune; she didn't rise from bed for a month.

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.