

Ronia Finkelshtein With Her Aunts And Uncle Lisa, Runia And Yunia Finkelshtein



My father's sister Lisa Finkelshtein, I, my father's sister Runia Finkelshtein and his brother Yunia Finkelshtein. We were photographed on the occasion of Uncle Yunia's visit from Kharkov at the photo shop at 20, Oktaibrskaya Street in Poltava in 1926. When I was 8 I went to a Russian secondary school near our house. There were many Jewish children in our school. They didn't know Yiddish because their parents believed it was better for them to study in Russian schools to make their further education easier. In 1929 our house was transferred to the military. We received a two-bedroom apartment in a two-storied building near a big market. I had a room of my own, my parents lived in the bigger room. My mother bought a new cupboard and put my grandfather's bed behind the cupboard. We also had a wardrobe and two sideboards. There was a bookshelf in my parents' room. I also remember a desk covered with heavy green cloth and a low marble table. I had a wooden bed, a wardrobe and a book stand with my textbooks in my room. I liked reading, but we didn't have many books at home. We borrowed books from one another at school. We mainly read Russian classics. I remember books by Sholem Aleichem and Jewish writers in Russian. There were many children in our yard. We played together, planted flowers and fed dogs. I had Russian and Jewish friends. When we moved to a new apartment I went to another school. It was a Russian secondary school. I became a pioneer at school. The admission ceremony took place in the cultural center of the knitwear factory named after Nogin. I was to turn 10 in three months' time. When I came onto the stage and the commission asked me how old I was, my classmates began to whisper that I should tell them that I had turned 10. I couldn't lie and said that I would be ten soon. I was very concerned that they wouldn't admit me because children only became pioneers after they had turned 10. I was admitted, and when I got my red necktie I felt very happy. There were also badges with pioneer fire flames. I remember how proudly we were marching home past the synagogue. We ran into the synagogue, but were told to get out of there. We couldn't understand why. My grandfather was skeptical about my becoming a pioneer, but he understood that it was the trend at the time. I continued to celebrate Jewish holidays with my family, but I didn't tell anybody at school about it. We had various clubs at school, such as a defense club and a physical

culture club. We issued wall newspapers and took an active part in electoral campaigns. We went around the town on trucks holding posters. On Soviet holidays we arranged amateur concerts, recited poems and sang Soviet songs. I studied well. I was good at all subjects, but my favorite one was mathematics.