

Dimitri Kamyshan With His Parents Anatoliy Zilberberg And Olga Kamyshan



Our family: my father, Anatoliy Zilberberg, my mother, Olga Kamyshan, and I in Yalta, in the Crimea in 1932. Our family went on vacation to the Crimea every year. We sent this picture to my grandmother and aunts in Kharkov.

My father met my mother, Olga Kamyshan, in 1923 when he was 21 and working as an accountant. My mother was 18 years old at the time. She was Russian and born in 1905. Her father, Peter Kamyshan, staff-captain in the tsarist army, was commander of a battalion. He perished in August 1914 during World War I. My grandmother, Lidia Kamyshan, came from a Russian aristocratic family. When my mother met my father in 1923 her family told her to leave, because they weren't going to accept a Jew as a member of their family. My father's family gave her shelter. The Zilberberg family had no national prejudices and they accepted their Russian daughter-in-law. My mother was a very pretty and nice girl, and my father's parents liked her a lot.

I was born in 1927. I was the only nephew of my aunts, and they doted on me. I remember the two-storied mansion in the center of Kharkov, where we lived, and our cozy shady yard. All my paternal grandmother's children lived with her. Each member of the family had a room of his own. Later the house was turned into a shared apartment block. The family of the chief of the town police lived on the first floor, and my grandmother and her daughters occupied the second floor, an area of about 100 square meters. Their apartment was richly furnished, and there were very expensive dishes and table sets in the cupboards.

My parents and I lived in a separate apartment in the same building, but I stayed with my grandmother most of the time. My parents went to work and didn't have time to look after me. I spent a lot of time walking and playing in the yard. There were German, Jewish, Lithuanian, Polish, Russian and Ukrainian families in the surrounding buildings. All neighbors got along well and spoke Russian. Nationality was of no significance at that time.

My parents took me on vacation to the Crimea every year. Now I understand that my father and mother didn't earn enough to afford such trips, and that they were probably using my

grandmother's savings. [Editor's note: Salaries and wages were very low at the time, and even state officials couldn't afford much for the payment they received.]