

Evgenia Shapiro's Grandfather Isaac Shapiro



My grandfather on my father's side, Isaac Shapiro. The picture was taken for the Board of Honor at the garment factory in Leningrad in the middle of the 1950s on the occasion of the award of 'Best fitter in Leningrad' given to him. He was working at the garment factory and participated in a contest. His portrait was placed on the Board of Honor of the factory. My grandfather was born in Borisov in 1876. He was deaf and dumb and had no education. He was a tailor. He was a very good tailor, but he didn't have many clients, as it was difficult to communicate with him. He made men's clothes. According to Jewish rules a man wasn't supposed to even look at a woman if they weren't acquainted, and so my grandfather never made women's clothes. He observed all religious traditions and celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays, although he wasn't fanatically religious. He didn't wear a hat or have a beard. He was a very kind and nice man - one could see it in his eyes.

My grandfather had a drinking problem, though. My father often told me how his mother took him by the hand in the evening and how they went from tavern to tavern looking for my grandfather. By the time they found him he was usually dead drunk. They often found him on the roadside. He felt different from other people because he was deprived of their capability to hear and talk. Drinking helped him to forget about it for a short time. In 1954 he came from Leningrad to visit us in Kharkov. I couldn't communicate with him, but my father could using deaf-and-dumb language. We lived near the central park in Kharkov. My grandfather liked to sit on a bench in the park watching young women. Later he told my father about how many beautiful women there were in Kharkov and how happy he was to have seen them. My grandfather died in the late 1960s. My grandmother died some time before. They were both buried at the Jewish factory in Leningrad.