

Evgenia Shapiro's Father Jacob Shapiro And His Family



My father's family. From left to right, standing are my father's brother Lipa Shapiro, my father's sister Rebecca Rudnitskaya and her husband Vladimir Rudnitskiy. Sitting are my grandfather, Isaac Shapiro, my grandmother Nehama Shapiro and my father Jacob Shapiro. The photo was taken in Leningrad on Rebecca's birthday on 19th September 1937. 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. My grandmother was born in Borisov in 1890. She could read and write a little. Her parents forced her into marriage in 1907 when she was 17. They were very poor and so they were keen to see their daughters married off at a young age. They made Nehama marry the first man that agreed to marry her. Her wedding party was small. It was a traditional Jewish wedding with a huppah. They borrowed a gown for the bride and a suit for the bridegroom from their neighbors. My grandfather was 14 years older than my grandmother. They had three children: my father Jacob, Lipa and Rebecca. Rebecca was born in Borisov in 1917. She finished Russian grammar school in Borisov. My father studied in Leningrad at the time. He received an apartment, and Rebecca and their parents moved in with him. She was impressed by the Soviet propaganda of equal possibilities for men and women and took to men's professions. She worked as a carpenter at a plant in Leningrad and then learned to drive vehicles. At the end of the 1930s she was a driver for the secretary of a district party Committee in Leningrad. In 1938 she married Vladimir Rudnitskiy, a Jew. He was a pilot. My father got a job assignment in the Far East [35,000 km from Kiev] in 1934. We lived in a military town in the taiga, without a name, but a number. There was one apartment building for officers and their families, and barracks for soldiers. Life in the taiga was very hard. Until July 1943 my father was a military commissar of the radio unit of the Far East front, and later he became head of this unit. He was the only Jewish head of the communications unit in the Red Army. My father had organizational skills and was a professional.