

Marina Shoihet With Her Cousin And Aunts



Lower row from left to right: me, Mara, Uncle Boris' daughter. Upper row: Sonia, Uncle Boris' wife and Zhenia Reznik, Uncle Emil's wife. The photo was taken in 1943 in Chimkent. The war began on 22nd June 1941. Uncle Boris was summoned to the army almost immediately. Uncle Emil was in the army in Vladimir-Volynsk at this time. His wife Zhenia was in Kiev, and Boris's wife (she already had a second daughter, Marochka) was also in Kiev. My father was mobilized to evacuate the Ukrainian knitwear industry. Before his departure, he told us to get ready to evacuate. My mother and grandmother, two daughters-in-law, my cousin Marochka, Lilia, my father's niece, and I got on the train. The train slowly went to Kharkov. My father was in Poltava [350 km from Kiev]. My mother was at a loss. She didn't know in what direction we should proceed. Then they decided that Astrakhan was too far away for the Germans to cover, and that they should go to my mother's brother Grigoriy. This was the right decision. We went to our family, and they met us, and accommodated us nicely. We stayed for about two months in Astrakhan, and then my father got a job as director of the stocking factory in Chimkent, in Kazakhstan. He came to take us there. The three of us went with him: my mother, my grandmother and I. In Chimkent we got accommodation in a small house on the factory site. My mother wanted her daughters-in-law to join us, and aunt Sonia and Marochka and Zhenia arrived within two or three weeks. The Germans were advancing. Uncle Grigoriy was recruited to the army. Aunt Hanna stayed in Astrakhan with Romochka. Later they joined us in Chimkent. Eleven of us occupied two rooms in this house in evacuation. I'd like to say we all had wonderful relationships that were an example for us for the rest of our lives. Although our father was director of the factory, we didn't have enough food. My mother said we ate meals from flour and water and cooked some local turtles. My grandmother went to the market to exchange things for food. She first tried to get a few lumps of sugar for the children. Aunt Sonia worked as a cashier and my mother worked in the planning department at the factory. Zhenia worked as an accountant. Those were very hard years, but people always got together at our place for a cup of tea. We girls recited poems and sang songs. We knew all the wartime songs. We returned to Kiev in April 1945. When it was liberated, my father submitted requests to the authorities to be allowed to return to Kiev from Chimkent.