

Sima Shvarts' Husband Litman Veksler



My husband Litman Veksler during his army service. The photo was taken in 1932 in Kiev. When I went to college, there was a military unit right across the street from our college. We went to dance at each other's clubs: we girls went to dance at theirs, and they came to dance at ours. This is how I met my future husband. I was 19 years old then, and he was 26. He was from a Jewish family. My husband's family comes from Gomel in Belarus. At that time they were living in Kiev, and my husband served in the army. His name was Litman Veksler. When I finished college he went to my mother to ask for permission to marry me. It was very solemn. He brought flowers - he knew that both my mother and I loved flowers very much. To have at least two small flowers in a vase was like a law for us. Even though we were poor, having flowers at home was our hobby. So, after that we got married. It was in 1933. There was no wedding ceremony or anything like that. He came from work, told me to wait for him. Then we went to the registration office, from there we

went to his parents, who cooked a regular lunch. We had no wedding rings, no special dresses. Everything was very simple. I think we did it in such a way because we were very poor. My husband was still serving, but very soon, in the autumn, he was demobilized. He was given a room in a communal apartment. We had a big room in a communal flat. We had three neighbors, a common kitchen and a toilet, but we got used to living with neighbors. My husband only had secondary education, but he was a highly educated man. He worked at a woodwork factory as the chief of the shift. Then he was transferred to work for the city executive committee as chief of some department. We continued to live in our room, even though my husband would have been able to get a flat adequate to his office. But he was very modest and considered it indecent for a party member to ask for the improvement of his living conditions. His mother told him, 'Litmanke (she called him Litmanke), why don't you take care of getting a new flat?' And he answered her, 'Mom, I shouldn't do that now. The time will come when I'll get one, but not now.' That's how it was. My husband wasn't paid much. He received the 'party maximum' - the sum that was the maximum limit for him to earn as a party member. The sum was not very large, but we didn't demand much, so it was enough for us. He had been a member of the Communist Party since the 1920s, so he was a man who believed in communism. Throughout his whole life he believed in the ideals of communism. He didn't know, and didn't want to know, what really happened in our country, and thought that everything happened because it was meant to. We knew that there was fascism in Germany and that the war broke out in Europe. But we believed that the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact guaranteed that our country would never be engaged in a war, so we were not ready for the war. In June 1941 my husband was mobilized. However, he stayed in Kiev for a long time. He worked at the pontoon-bridge battalion. They defended approaches to Kiev from the Dnepr River. He called us every day. But a short time later, about a week-and-a-half, my husband came home and said we needed to evacuate. We evacuated to Kokand in Uzbekistan. When I learned that Kiev was occupied by the Germans, it caused me great sorrow. My husband was still alive, I was still receiving letters from him, but this news brought me a lot of sorrow. My husband was killed somewhere in Sumy, Ukraine. There were a lot of units of the Soviet army there, and they were all bombed, even without fighting. I received a paper that said that my husband 'is reported missing'. I realized that he was killed because otherwise he would have found us after the war.