

Evgenia Bekker With Her Sister And Friends



This is my mother Evgenia Bekker, sitting on the right, and her younger sister Polina Bekker, sitting on the left, my mother's teacher colleagues and a neighbor boy. The photo was taken in Rybnitsa on the occasion of Polina's arrival on her vacation from Odessa in 1926. My maternal grandparents, Issac and Sarah Bekker, nee Mirochnik, had more than ten children. Only three survived: my mother's older brother, Grigory, born in 1898, my mother Evgenia born in 1902, and my mother's younger sister Polina, born in 1908. Their Jewish names were Gersh, Genia and Perl, respectively. All three children studied in a grammar school in Odessa when they were nine or ten years old. It was a private school. There were separate schools for boys and girls. Rybnitsa was 150 kilometers from Odessa and during their studies the children lived in the boarding school, which had classrooms, a canteen and bedrooms for few pupils. The children could go home at weekends. Jewish children had no classes on Saturday. I don't know whether Jewish students had to forego their religious rules, kosher food for example, and traditions at school. My mother finished seven years of grammar school. After the Revolution the grammar school was closed and my mother returned to Rybnitsa. The next year my mother went back to Odessa where she entered the Faculty of Philology of Odessa University. She didn't tell me much about her years at university. I know that she rented a bed from a Jewish woman who had a daughter. She also had meals with them. Her father sent her money to pay the rent and pay for meals. Since my mother needed more money to buy textbooks, notebooks, etc. she gave private lessons. She graduated from university with honors. She had a job offer in Odessa, but she decided to return to Rybnitsa. She got a job as teacher of Ukrainian and Russian languages and literature in a lower secondary school in Rybnitsa. At the beginning my mother stayed in a school dormitory, where she shared a room with two other teachers. Later she received a room at the school. My mother's younger sister Polina came to stay with my mother upon graduation from the Faculty of Mathematics of Odessa University. Polina had lung problems, like her mother. She had tuberculosis with hemorrhages. She was weak and sickly and my mother always took care of her. My mother tended to her and fed her when Polina was ill. Polina lived 82 years thanks to my mother. Polina was smart and pretty. She settled down with us in our room and began to work as a teacher of mathematics at school. Polina wasn't married either.