

Anna Lanota's Family From Skryhiczyn



This is the house of my aunt, Masza Halperin, in Skryhiczyn.

She is standing in the first row from the top, first from right. This man sitting in the first row first from left is her husband, Chaim Halperin.

They had four daughters: Ida Merzan, who is standing at the top, Gitl (who we called Gicia), sitting next to her father, Hanka, standing first from right and Sara, sitting at the bottom second from left.

I am sitting next to her, first from left, and the other girls in the middle are Ida's friends from Warsaw. I don't know when this photo was taken, it could have been a few years before war.

I used to go to Skryhiczyn every vacation from Lodz. I was very attached to that family. Aunt Masza was my father's sister, two years older than him. She married a very nice man, Chaim Halperin, and went to live with him in Odessa.

They were very wealthy, so when the Revolution broke out [the October Revolution, 1917], the Bolsheviks took everything away from them, and the headquarters of the Communist party was installed in their house.

Then they fled to Kishinev, Romania [today Moldova], to my uncle's family, and later my aunt and the children returned to Skryhiczyn.

Aunt Masza was truly an amazing woman; we all liked her very much, and all the women in the village used to go to her for advice. It was a little strange in her house, because they never cooked dinners - when you were hungry you went to the larder and got some food yourself.

My aunt didn't have time to cook, because she was always very busy, either in the fields or making butter. And my uncle worked with the farmhand in the fields.

Their eldest daughter, Ida, was my best friend. She was born in Odessa in 1907. When the Revolution broke out she went to Kishinev, to her father's family. She did her school-leaving exams there and then came to Poland.

After the vacation she went to Warsaw and enrolled for a course for pre-school teachers run by Janusz Korczak. She lived in the home for future pre-school teachers in Korczak's orphanage. Later Korczak employed her there.

Two years before the war she started work in the Centos home in Otwock. After that I worked there too, and she was my immediate superior. She got married and in 1938 had a daughter.

In September 1939 we reached Kovel together. From there she left for the Soviet Union. She came back to Poland in 1945. Just after the war she had a son. She worked writing pedagogical advice for parents for various magazines, for *Moje Dziecko* [My Baby], for *Przyjaciółka* [Girlfriend], for *Gazeta Żydowska* [The Jewish Newspaper].

I don't remember her having a permanent job; she always wrote, she wrote books, and wrote for magazines. She lived in Warsaw. She died a few years ago.

At the very beginning of the war, in September 1939, a few Ukrainians came to Halperins' house and shot my uncle, his son-in-law and his four-year-old grandson.

The reason for that wasn't anti-Semitism, because they left my aunt and her daughter alone. I think it was revenge on my uncle, perhaps settling of business scores, I don't know.

My uncle could have annoyed somebody, offended somebody, but harmed anybody - certainly not. We don't know why and we don't know who did it. The Germans murdered my aunt two years later.