

Emma Balonova's Mother-In-Law And Her Family



This photograph was taken in Leningrad in 1936 in the house of my future husband's parents.

It was taken by their relative. I became a member of this remarkable family 4 years later.

My maternal relatives I remember better, because all of them are my relatives twice: I married the son of my mother's brother, i.e. my mother's nephew or my cousin.

My mother's family lived in Riga. As I already told you, parents died early in life and children had to make their own way in life. Riga was a big European city.

There lived very rich families, most of them were German. Many girls, including mother's sisters, worked for rich German families making clothes for all family members.

My mother-in-law and her sisters did the same when they were young. They also lived in Riga.

My mum's brother Yakov was a very qualified shoemaker. He had a great success making shoes. He also lived in Riga.

By that time managers of a shoe factory in Petersburg decided to improve their production process making better footwear.

They wanted to invite highly skilled experts. Several managers from that factory came to Riga to find the best shoemakers. Among others, they invited my uncle, who became my future father-in-law.

By that time he was already married to my future mother-in-law and they had a son (my future husband) Isaac Yakovlevich Balonov.

They considered themselves to be lucky, when Isaac got an invitation to the Petersburg factory: they did not want to remain in Riga as they were disquieted by rumors of the coming war, they had temptation to go to Russia.

The factory gave them a good apartment, and their family settled there. Later Yakov's younger sister Emma came to their place too.

In Leningrad I was not lonely: there lived my uncle Yakov (at that time I did not know that he would become my father-in-law). I visited my uncle every Saturday.

I made friends with Maria, my cousin. And my cousin Isaac did not live at home: he was a military man. He was much elder than me, and in 1936 he graduated from the 1st Medical College in Leningrad. [The St. Petersburg Medical University (former College) named after Pavlov was founded in 1897.]

Among the students of their group there were 3 boys, after graduation they all were called up for military service. Isaac served near Leningrad. Almost every Saturday he came home, bought theater tickets for me and Maria, gave us money to buy cakes.

Later he started going to theatres and concerts together with us. It seemed to me that he treated me like a child. One day before his long business trip, he asked me 'Will you marry me?' I answered 'Yes!' I thought it was a joke.

Next day he left. And later I received a letter from him, where he wrote that he would be happy to marry me. Only then I understood it was not a joke, but that day I had to start on my destiny.