

Iyah Dziekovskaya's Grandmother Ethel El'bert, Mother Nadezhda Dziekovskaya And Sister Inna Dziekovskaya With Their Neighbors



This is my mother Nadezhda Dziekovskaya, grandmother Ethel El'bert (sitting together in the center) and my sister Inna Dziekovskaya (on my grandmother's lap) with our neighbors in the yard of our house. This photo was taken in Dnepropetrovsk in 1934. This photograph was taken in spring, when my grandmother was taking a walk in the yard with Inna. An acquaintance of ours came by with his camera and my mother came outside without her coat to be photographed with us. Grandmother also invited our neighbors who were in the yard. Our house of red bricks can be seen in the background.

In 1930 my parents moved to Dnepropetrovsk and grandmother Ethel followed them. She worked a little during the Soviet regime, and Soviet authorities gave her a miserable pension of 6 or 9 rubles. My mother and father insisted that she wrote a letter of refusal from this pension.

My grandmother wasn't religious and didn't observe Jewish traditions, but I remember an incident. Once my mother fell ill. Grandmother Ethel, who didn't even know to boil semolina, decided to go to the market for the first time in her life. She bought us a doll, a postman or a monkey - we never found out. Somebody convinced her to buy it, you know. She also brought a living hen. My grandmother probably knew that it is not allowed to buy chickens slaughtered by God knows whom. A shochet had to slaughter chickens. However, nobody in our family could slaughter it. My

mother told me once that she heard terrible noise in the kitchen. She went to the kitchen however ill she was feeling. She saw my father and grandmother sticking to a corner, and a neighbor was throwing logs into the chicken trying to kill it. In the end they gave this chicken away. Grandmother Ethel looked after my sister and me.

In March 1940 grandmother Ethel died from pneumonia, a common cause of death with old people. She was 74. Here I would like to mention something that caused our emotional shock. Before the revolution a girl who wanted to become a doctor asked my grandmother to help her. She came from a rich and conservative family. Her parents thought that women of her circles could not do any work. My grandmother supported her during the course of her studies. They kept in touch, but after the revolution they lost track of one another. When my grandmother was dying, my mother called an ambulance and the doctor who arrived on call was that woman. She recognized my grandmother the moment she stepped into the room. My mother said later that it wasn't just an ordinary coincidence. This woman lived in Dnepropetrovsk in the same street 11 years, but they didn't meet once. She couldn't even come to my grandmother's funeral feeling ill. My grandmother was buried in the Jewish cemetery, but I don't remember the ritual.