

Isabella Karanchuk's Mother Raya Lerman's And Her Friends



These are my mother's friends: the one on the left is my father's brother Zinoviy Lerman and his future wife Lisa is beside him. This photo was taken in Mogilyov in 1927. My mother's parents Yankel-Avrum and Cherna Ziskind came from Mogilyov. They were born around the 1860s, though I don't know for sure and this judgment of mine is based on my mother brothers and sisters' age. The thing is there were 18 children in the Ziskind family! Four of them died in infancy. My mother told me that grandfather Yankel-Avrum built his own house. There were four rooms in the house full of their children, grandchildren, relatives and friends. My grandfather earned well, but there were too many of them in the family and therefore, they lived a modest life. Though they had everything they needed for life, grandfather Avrum could not afford to give his children education. The boys finished cheder and few forms in the Jewish primary school and had to study vocation to help the family. The girls also studied at school. My mother told me that the family was very religious. My mother Haika (she was called Raya in the soviet period) was the youngest in the family. She was born in Mogilyov in 1908. My mother finished 6 or 7 forms of the Jewish school. She could read and write and learned Russian and Byelorussian. At the age of about 15 mama had to go to work. She found a job at the confectionery. She was very fond of theater. There was a Jewish amateur theater at the club of a factory in Mogilyov and mama was one of the leading actresses in it. They staged Jewish plays, mainly of Sholom Aleichem. My mother must have been very talented. She was praised high and even the local Jewish newspaper wrote about her talent. My mother Haika and my father Haim Lerman met at this theater. Shortly after the wedding my parents moved to Kharkov where my father went to work in a shoe shop. I was born on 8 August 1928. My mother was a housewife. My parents rented a room in a communal apartment where my parents slept behind a curtain. Soon my father received a small two-bedroom apartment in a one-storied house. I don't remember any details of our life in Kharkov. All I remember is a big yard with many children, whose names I don't remember, playing in it. I don't remember the famine in the early 1930s, probably because my parents tried to protect me from knowing it. My parents spoke Yiddish and my mother told me that I also knew few words in Yiddish, but forgot them in the course of time.