

Rimma Leibert With Her Family



This is our family first postwar photo - standing on the left is my mother Rosa Leibert (in a flowered dress), beside her is my stepfather Boris Evenchik holding my brother Eugeni, and the woman on the right is my stepfather fellow officer's wife. Sitting from left to right: I, my older sister Maya Leibert, and my cousin Galia, aunt Ola's daughter. This photo was taken in Yavorov in 1952 by my stepfather's fellow officer. On 22 June 1941 the Great Patriotic War began. My father went to the front, he perished during the liberation of Western Ukraine on 16 August 1944. We lived in Tbilisi during the wartime. My mother went to work at the army headquarters. I don't know how she managed to get food for us, but I don't remember being starved. Often after work my mother went to help in the hospital in half hour drive from our house. My mother spent most time away from home. My sister looked after me and gave me food. Every now and then a neighbor would have come by to see whether everything was all right with us. Sometimes my sister and I took an old tram to go to the hospital. We recited poems and sang songs to patients. The wounded military laughed and looked happy. They gave us chocolate. This chocolate was so very delicious that I still seem to feel the taste of it on my lips. In early 1945 the military unit where my mother was working in the headquarters, relocated to Western Ukraine. My mother decided to move with them. So we arrived in Lvov in January 1945 in a military train. My mother went to work in the officer's restaurant. There were many vacant apartments in Lvov and my mother received a posh two-bedroom apartment in the center of Lvov. There were furniture and household utensils in it. Its owners must have perished in the ghetto. My mother sent an invitation letter to her sisters, and in autumn 1945 Ola, her daughter and Tsylia joined us. We lived together in our apartment. My mother brought food leftovers from her work, so we tried to manage through those hard postwar years. Once a military man came to the restaurant where my mother was working. He liked my mother and began to come there more often. So my mother met Boris Evenchik, who fell in love

with her and proposed to my mother. My mother invited him to our home. He spent this evening with us and told us his story. Boris Evenchik was born to a common Jewish family in Minsk. Boris was conductor of the military orchestra of Byelorussia. On the first days of the war Boris' military unit relocated to the frontline area. His wife, their two daughters, Iosif, his wife and two children, Hana, her husband and their three children perished during the first actions in Minsk. Boris was at the front through the whole period of the war. He was in Prague, when the war ended. He was awarded an order of Lenin, Combat Red Banner and Red Star, and had numerous medals. Mama and Boris got married soon and he moved into our apartment. What do I say - Boris charmed me at once. I began to call my stepfather 'papa' almost at once and I never ever regretted this. He loved me as his own daughter and spoiled me even more than he probably would have spoiled his own daughter. Boris got an assignment to Zholkva town in Lvov region in autumn 1946. My mother only packed whatever clothes we had and we left without taking a cup or any other thing from the apartment in Lvov. We lived in Zholkva for less than a year before my stepfather got an assignment in Yavorov where we received a good four-bedroom apartment. Our life was gradually improving. I went to a Russian school in Yavorov in 1947. I wasn't the best student at school, but I wasn't among the worst either. I didn't take part in any public activities and was always eager to come back home to enjoy the warm and cozy atmosphere of my family. In 1950 my brother Eugeniy was born. My mother was a housewife. Boris earned well and we were doing rather well in this regard. In summer we went on family vacations to the Crimea. We rented a little hut at the seashore and enjoyed the sun and the sea, each other and doing nothing for few weeks in a row. These were the happiest moments of my life.