

Rachil Lemberg With Her College Band



This is our college band where I sang. I am the first from the left in the upper row. This photo was taken in Poltava, USSR, in 1938.

After finishing school in 1938 I wanted to continue my studies in the Construction College in Odessa, 470 km from Kiev. This was a big town and it wasn't too far from Ananiev. However, my mother was against it. She thought Odessa was not a good idea for a girl to live there alone. She said there were loose morals in big towns and it would be hard for me to get adjusted to them. My mother insisted that I went to Poltava to her sister Esther. My sister Bella and her husband also lived there.

I passed my entrance exams with all excellent marks and was admitted to the Faculty of Civil and Industrial Construction. I could live in a hostel. But my aunt Esther insisted that I lived with them. I studied well and took part in the amateur art club and choir. I liked singing. I had a good voice and a good pitch. I spent my winter and summer vacations with my parents in Ananiev. Of course, I missed home a lot. We received small stipends. It was too little to make a living and my mother sent us money and food with every occasion she could get.

When I came home on vacation after finishing my second year in college in 1940 I met Yulik Rabinovich, my former classmate from the Jewish school who also came to Ananiev on vacation, he studied in the Construction College in Odessa. Yulik confessed that he had loved me all these years. He went to tell my parents that we were going to get married after finishing our studies and ask their consent to my moving to study in Odessa. However strange it was for me my parents gave their consent and I got a transfer to Odessa Construction College. I lived in a hostel. After classes Yulik and I went for walks, to the cinema or theaters. On 20 June 1941, after passing my last exam I went to my parents in Ananiev. On 22 June 1941 we heard on the radio that WWII began. I remember Molotov's speech. He spoke about perfidious attack of Germany. Stalin also spoke on the radio. Stalin said that we would win the war and I believed it.