

Irina Lopko's Mother Fania Mindel And Father David Mindel



My parents: my mother Fania Mindel (nee Silin) and my father David Mindel. This photo was made in Nezhin in 1927.

My mother Fania Silin was born in 1907. She also studied in grammar school for few years and she often recalled this time in her life. My mother did very well at school, but in 1818 the grammar school was closed and later it was reopened to be a labor school. My mother continued studies in an accounting school. After the Great Patriotic War my mother finished extramural Moscow Financial College.

My father David Mindel, born in 1901. My father was well shaped and strong. When a circus came on tour into the town my father's relatives tried to persuade my father to stay aside from its performances. My father gave his word, dressed up and went to the circus. When wrestlers came onto the stage and invited volunteers from the audience to take part in their performance the audience began to call 'David! David!' and my father went onto the stage against his relatives' objections. He often won. My father used to say that he had an incomplete lower education. He was a cattle driver since childhood and he even had a certificate of 'cattle driver'. Later he became a cab driver when he met my mother.

My parents met when standing in line to pay fees: my mother came to pay a fee for her dying father and my father came to pay tax for his horses. My mother didn't have enough money and my father came and said 'I will pay for you'. She was confused. My mother was tiny and shy. She asked 'How do I pay you back?' and he replied 'I will find you'. My mother studied in an accounting school and other boys she knew were not at all like my father. He was a big man with a whip (now they have keys from their cars with them, but at that time they had to take their whips with them) and he made a great impression on my mother. My mother told her friends about this man. She didn't know how he would find her. Everybody knew Mindel brothers in Nezhin. When there were girls on the beach they used to gallop their horses into the river. They were athletes and absolutely adored horses. Once my mother was dancing at a party in her accounting school when her friends said

'Fania, there is a man standing in the doorway gazing at you. He looks like the one you described'. My mother looked back. It was him, but he disappeared. After the party my mother went out and my father stopped her. He said 'Hallo, I've come to pick the debt'. She felt confused again. She never had any money. He said 'In that case marry me'. My mother and her friends burst into laughing and got on his sledge. There was no space left for my mother and then my father grabbed her with his hand and put her on the seat beside him wrapping her in his winter coat. My mother recalled later 'I felt like fainting. I thought I could ride in his embrace for the rest of my life'. Such was a beginning of this great love. My mother's father died shortly afterward. Her father died young and my mother told me later that she had my father in her dreams, although he kept his distance, but she already was tying her life to his. After the funeral he took all children home on his wagon. He took responsibility for their family.

They got married a year later in 1826. I know for sure that there was a chuppah on their wedding. It was customary for the time that bridegrooms borrowed somebody else's clothes for a wedding. My father had someone else's coat on to have better looks. This was the coat of Yevsey, my father's sister Sima's husband. When it was over my father was looking for his coat. My mother whispered to him: 'David, you've come wearing Yevsey's coat and he left in yours'. They often recalled this episode laughing.