

Abram Shatkhin



This is my younger brother, Abram Shatkhin, photographed in the school yard by a photographer at our parents' request at the ceremony of the beginning of a new academic year on 1st September 1932, Chernevtsy village.

Hard times came in 1932-33. Famine came to Ukraine, and the situation in villages was much worse than in towns. Those, who had farmlands and vegetable gardens, were better off while we had just nothing. We starved. We picked berries, mushrooms and some roots in the woods. However, we all managed somehow, but my father. He caught a terrible cold in winter and was very weak.

In winter 1933 Father died. We buried him in the Jewish cemetery near his parents and my older brother Boruch. After he died the authorities took away his store from us. Mother decided we had to move to Chernevtsy to live closer to her brother.

My acquaintance in Chernevtsy was a communication operator at the post office. He said I could get some training to become a telephone operator. Mama, my younger brother and sister moved to Chernevtsy. We rented two small rooms and a kitchen from a local woman. She was a single older Jewish woman. She lived in her house in one room.

My acquaintance helped me to get a job at the post office. It didn't take me long to learn the job of a telephone operator. There was no automatic dialing at that time. Telephone operators worked manually. There was nothing hard about this job, as long as we were attentive. I received salary

and occasional food packages: flour, cereal, sunflower oil.

My brother Abram also went to work at the post office, and was trained to be a communication operator. A Vinnitsa communication school affiliate opened in Chernevtsy and my brother went to study there by correspondence. After finishing this school he was offered a job in 'Spetssviaz' [special communication] at the NKVD office. His office was responsible for installation and maintenance of special communication cables.