

Tsyliya Spivak's Aunt Bodana Siganevich



My mother's sister Bodana. This photo was taken in Chernigov in 1931. She gave this photo to my parents for the memory.

My mother came from a big Jewish family living in Sednevo town in Chernigov province, 200 km from Kiev. I've never been to Sednevo, but my mother told me that it was like any other small Jewish town. There was a synagogue in the town. Jews commonly dealt in crafts and trade. My mother's father Borukh Kaplan, my grandfather, was a tradesman. My grandmother Tsyvah, who was 12 years younger than my grandfather, was a housewife and looked after the children. Sometimes she helped my grandfather in the store in the house where the family lived. They didn't have any other employees working for them in the store. They were selling haberdashery and household goods in their little store and Ukrainian customers of my grandfather from surrounding villages often came by my grandfather's store to buy what they needed. My grandfather got along well with Ukrainians. In 1919 his big family moved to Chernigov [regional center in the north of Ukraine, 220 km from Kiev] after selling their remaining belongings. In Chernigov my grandfather bought a small two-bedroom apartment in a private house where they lived until before the Great Patriotic War. My grandmother and grandfather were very religious people. They ate kosher food and celebrated Sabbath. The whole family got together on big religious Jewish holidays. There were 12 children born to the family, but before the Great Patriotic War there were seven of them left. The rest of the children died in infancy.

Bodana approximately born in 1896. Bodana was far from good looking and as a result she grew up uncultivated and unsociable. Young men avoided her and she didn't marry for a long time. She gave up any hopes for personal life of a happy life as a woman. About 1938 a Jewish man came to

work in the shop where Yakov worked. His name was Semyon Siganevich. For a long time he was working in this shop, but then he was put to jail for some misdemeanor and stayed in a camp for a few years. While he was serving his sentenced his wife divorced him and remarried and when Semyon returned he had nowhere to lay his head. Uncle Yakov said to him: 'I will introduce you to my sister Bodana. She isn't much to go for, but who knows...' So they met and got married shortly afterward. They got along well and Semyon grew fond of plain Bodana and she returned his feelings. In 1940 43-year old Bodana gave birth to their daughter Fania and Fania's parents just adored her. When the Great Patriotic War began Semyon was one of the first to go the war. He perished shortly afterward. Bodana and Fania were in evacuation in Orsk with us. After returning to Chernigov Bodana never remarried. She lived with grandmother Tsyvah after the war. Grandmother died in 1960, and Bodana died in 1980. Fania repeated her mother's fate and didn't get married for a long time. Around 1975 she visited us in Kherson and met my husband's brother Yefim Spivak. They got married and Yefim moved to Fania in Chernigov. Their daughter Victoria was born there. A few years ago Victoria moved to Germany and then Fania and Yefim joined them there.