

Basya-Riva Tsvey



This is my, Alexander Tsvey's paternal grandmother Basya-Riva Tsvey. The picture was made in Leningrad in 1937.

My paternal grandfather Moishe Tsvey and grandmother Basya-Riva Tsvey (nee Mostova) lived in the town of Volyntsy [800 km to the west from Moscow] Gomel oblast, Belorussia. My paternal great grandfather Berl Mostov also lived in the town Volyntsy. I do not know when and where he was born. He was an elderly tall man. He was well respected in the town. My father took after him, and I after my father, but my mother and all her kin were of short height. Great grandfather Berl was a merchant. The Mostovs family was one of the three richest families in the town. Great grandfather Berl died in 1919. I do not know how many children were there in the Mostovs family. My grandmother Basya-Riva was born in 1883.

Grandmother was a stately and beautiful woman. My grandfather fell in love with her and wooed her. There is a family legend - grandmother told grandpa: "Prove that you love me!" and he took off valenki [warm Russian felt boots] in wintertime and had been running around on the snow until grandmother agreed to marry him. Of course, grandmother was the boss in the family.

My father was the first-born. Grandmother gave birth to him in 1902. I know only his Russian name [Common name] Yuri. He must have had a Jewish name, but I did not know it. Mother had escaped to talk about father. He was a grey-eyed, tall and good-looking man. He played mandolin very well. The Tsvey family was musical on the whole. Unfortunately there is little I know my father's siblings. Now the family is gone, and there is nobody I can ask questions. I remember father's brothers

Abram, Israel, Solomon, Efim and sister Sofia.

The family Tsvey was well-off. They dealt with leather - beginning from the tannery, making leatherwear and selling it. Grandfather had his own store. Children also were involved in work. They bought skin of the animals and tanned it. Being the eldest my father did most of the work. He tanned the skin manually by using hazardous chemical agents, staying by the tub with the solution for tanning. He must have undermined his health during work and was afflicted with tuberculosis, which caused his death, also during his work. After revolution as of 1917 authorities took production from grandfather and the family was bereft of the source of income.

My father died from lung tuberculosis in 1927. He was buried in Volyntsyy. I do not know where his grave is. Mother did not tell me hardly anything about father. Even Uncle Solomon did not tell me all about him. Grandfather commemorated the day of father's death till the end of his days. He always went to the synagogue on that day and read kaddish for his son, who died earlier than he. Candles were lit at home on that day. Father's kin probably felt guilty and tried to help mother the best they could. Grandfather's family had been taking care of me, especially uncle Solomon.

In late 1920s father's parents and brothers moved to Leningrad with families. Grandmother died in 1940. She was buried in Leningrad Jewish cemetery in accordance with the Jewish rite. Grandfather got married for the second time. She was also a Jew. Grandfather remained religious till death. It is difficult for me to judge his religiousness, but I know that he strictly observed Jewish traditions, observed kashrut. Grandfather died in 1966 in Leningrad having survived the siege. He was buried next to grandmother in accordance with the Jewish rite, the way he wished.