

Dobrina Rivkind's Maternal Aunts Khana Khodek And Liya Sukhodrevka With Their Friend Sara.



This picture was taken in Leningrad in 1929. These are my maternal aunts Khana Khodek and Liya Sukhodrevka as young girls: Liya is 21 and Khana is 20. The photo must be taken in summer as both girls are wearing very light beautiful white dresses.

All of my mother's relatives come from shtetle not far from the town of Vitebsk - a rather large city in Belarus. My mother's family was very poor. Grandfather Vulf Khodek worked for a container seller. He earned about three rubles per month, which was very little. Grandmother's name was Tsylya Khodek, nee Rukhman. She did not work and took care of the family. There were four children in the family: three girls and one boy. All four were born in Vitebsk. Mother was the eldest, her name was Pesya, she was born in 1899 and died at the age of 95 in 1994. Her sisters' names were Khana (1907 - 1993), Lilya (1908 - 1954), and brother's name was Lev (1904 - 1942). There were also other children in the family but they died at a very young age.

Later, about 1897, they moved to Vitebsk. They lived near Vitebsk before in Smolyany shtetl. According to the family, they had a small house there, with a small garden full of flowers, because they had three daughters, who loved flowers very much. Certainly, there were no servants in the household they had to do everything on their own. Grandmother was very strict and demanding. Everybody had their own tasks. My mother Pesya was the eldest in the family and she had to drag the washing to the river, to wash and take care of the small children. All the rest had various tasks depending on the time of the year: someone was responsible for watering the plant in the garden in summer and washed the floor in the house, when winter came; the other one helped mother to clean the house, and another one helped to mend the clothes. But the house was very clean. However, in spite of poverty, grandparents tried to provide their children with some education. I remember they even had some teacher, who came to the house and taught children minimal literacy: to read, write and count. Later mother with her friends attended some courses, which were called "likbez" in those days [liquidation of illiteracy], which provided her with knowledge,

equal to 7-year educational course. The brother did not get more education than the sisters, he was taught as much as they were.

After the Revolution in 1917, they did not participate in the Revolution, it did not even affect them, they sold the small house where they lived, left Vitebsk and moved to Petrograd, now St. Petersburg. The Khodeks had a lot of friends in Vitebsk and some of these friends, a family, left with them for Petrograd. Their name was Biynshtok.

Lilya married a military, a career officer and followed him everywhere in his trips. They had two children: daughter Nelya and son Boris. Lilya did not work anywhere. Her husband perished at the frontline at the very beginning of the war. She also died early of a severe neurological disease, she was just 46 years old. Khana finished a musical school and worked as a teacher of chorus singing in various musical schools. She had no family of her own, she was never married. During the siege of Leningrad at the World War II she stayed in the city and worked in a kindergarten as an educator, helping children as much as she could. She lived in Leningrad for a long time and died here in 1993.