

Blyuma Perlstein With Her Siblings



These are my brothers and sisters: utmost to the left is my sister Rasya Sigalevich, second from left is Grigory Perlstein, second from right is me and utmost to the right is my sister Sofia Gofman. The photo was taken in Leningrad in 1935.

I had five brothers and two sisters: Lev, Yuda, Aron, Iosif, Grigory, Rasya and Sofia. They were all born in Yanovichi borough in Vitebsk region.

My brother Grigory left Yanovichi for Leningrad after Father died. He stayed with my brother Lev in Leningrad and worked as a foreman at a candy factory. Later he graduated from the Leningrad Aircraft Military School and was assigned to Novochoerkassk, where he worked as a mechanical pilot. During the Great Patriotic War he served in the North. After the war, in 1945, he returned to Novochoerkassk and continued working as a foreman at the factory. In 1970 he retired and moved to Moscow with his family. His wife's name was Yelena and they had three daughters: Inna, Arsha and Larisa. Grigory died in Moscow in 1999.

My sister Raisa, or Rasya, lived in Yanovichi borough and was a housewife. Her husband Sigalevich-Grigoryev and son Isaac were murdered by the Germans on 10th September 1941. Only her son Lev managed to escape the massacre and remained alive. He got into the military school and served in a tank unit. He retired holding the rank of lieutenant colonel.

My sister Sofia worked in Leningrad at the 'Electropribor' plant. During the war she was evacuated with her children – together with the plant – to the Urals. She died there in 1942 of stomach cancer. Her husband's name was Yefim Gofman and they had two children: daughter Polina and son Alexander.

I was born in December 1912 in Yanovichi borough, Vitebsk region. I was the youngest in the family. I was born tenth, but two of the children died, so I may be considered eighth. All my brothers and sisters were grown-up already and I was spoiled a bit. I went to a kindergarten for one summer, which was located in the former estate building. It was necessary to walk through the whole borough to reach the kindergarten. Being the youngest in the family, I hardly had to help my mother, since I had two elder sisters. Sofia was four years older than me and Rasya was a fourteen-year old bride when I was born.

My brothers went to school, we had textbooks and books at home, so with their assistance very early – when I was five years old or even earlier – I learnt to read and write. I even tried to use the drafting instruments. I went to the only seven-year Russian school, though there were Jewish schools. My parents considered it better to send me to a Russian school. We had wonderful teachers. My brothers and sisters went to the same school before me. I advanced in all subjects very well and liked algebra most of all. I also liked literature and read a lot. Our teacher of literature, Mikhail Vasilyevich, called me out when it was required to read something aloud for the class; I was his assistant. I read a lot of works of literature aloud. He even thought that I had a gift for literature. We also had a remarkable relationship with our teacher of physics and drawing. Radio was just introduced and we dismantled a crystal receiver and drew a lot. I even keep drawings which we made in our physics classes. I drew and designed a lot at home, so there are a lot of drawings in ink left. This teacher, Alexey Yakovlevich Kolonitsky, whom I already mentioned, was a real Yanovichi patriot. We had a sports group at the school which I attended. Sometimes we performed on stage at the Public House, showing sports pyramids and dances.