

Miriam Patova And Her Mother Sheina Patova



This is my mother Sheina Patova and I. This photo was taken in Rakvere in 1941.

My mother sewed hat linings while standing at the table, being too short to sit. She was clever with everything she did. She also taught us that nothing in life is easy. It can never be. She used to say, 'If you want to accomplish things in life, you have to be quick-witted. You have to pinwheel to have your rear ahead of you.' I often recall my mother's witty and wise expressions behind her joking manner. She only finished two years in elementary school, and this was all the education she managed to get. However, she did her best in learning things by herself. She spoke Estonian, German, Russian and Yiddish. She wrote in Russian with mistakes, but she could write well in Estonian. My mother wanted to go to Paris before she got married. It was quite common for girls from poorer families to go to Paris to learn dressmaking. When the training was over they returned home and opened their own businesses. Local ladies willingly ordered their dresses from dressmakers trained in Paris. This was quite a profitable business. My mother tried to convince my grandfather to send her to Paris, but he said he had no money. Therefore, my mother's dream to study never came true, and the only thing she had left in this regard was to dream for her children to get a good education.

My father made nice hats and had his customers, but he was slow. My mother did her best in assisting him. She was the center of our lives. She was very quick and did several things at a time. Despite her hard life my mother was cheerful and never drooped. She was good at sewing, knitting

and embroidery. She could even make fur clothing. I loved her dearly and never missed a chance to be with her. When sewing with her knitting machine my mother used to sing Jewish songs, and she did it well. I used to sit or stand besides her listening to her singing. I can't remember the songs, but when I hear them on the radio, I recall my childhood.

My mother brought us up to be hardworking. She often repeated that she would be happy if I didn't have to work hard in my life, had nicely groomed hands, different from her worked out hands. However, she wanted me to know everything and to be able to do things.