

Boris Shteinas And His Sister Chana



This is I (to the left) and my sister Chana. The picture was taken by father on my birthday in Siauliai, 1935.

My parents got married in 1927. They started renting an apartment after wedding. It lived in the same house where my father's parents-in-law were living. Grandfather Shneer rented an apartment on the second floor and we lived on the first floor. In 1929 my elder sister Chana was born. I came into the world on 19 May 1933. This date is not exact. At that time the date of birth was recognized by the Jewish holidays. I know that I was born on holiday Lag ba-Omer, dated during the period of time when I was born.

I was born, raised, in Lithuania, and lived here most of the time apart from the period of evacuation and service in Soviet Army. I love this country and think it to be my motherland. I am nee Shtein, and Lithuanian ending was added to my last name after war when my documents were issued. My first name was also different. My name was Aron. I had been called Orka since childhood. Russians turned my name into Borka and the name Boris Shtein was written in all my documents. Thus, I became Boris, though I never forgot my nee name Aron.

We lived at 94 Dvara street. Dvara means Cathedral in Lithuanian. During the soviet time the street was renamed after partisan Marites Melnikkayite. Now the historical name of the street is back. The landlord of the house- Lithuanian Gelezhinete was a very sweet lady and grandmother Ester got along with her. The house was located in the heart of the city. I am still living on that street. I remember prewar Siauliai perfectly well. It was not a very big town. The population was

about 40 thousand people. Half of Siauliai inhabitants were Jews, and the rest were Lithuanians, Russians, Poles. At that time the town was considered to be industrial center of Lithuania. There were a lot of enterprises here, which were mostly owned by Jews.

Our family was not rich. We did not have our own apartment. Most of the money earned was spent on rent. Our family occupied three rooms. The house was wooden. It was heated by stove. We had solid handmade furniture. There was nothing extra, only necessary things.

Our family had a modest living. I remember that parents had a long discussion before buying us anything as they wanted to save money and to buy cheaper things. Besides, mother made most of the clothes for us. As for the food, it was lavish and delicious, though no dainties. We had meat every day, not only on the weekend. Meat was bought in kosher stores. Poultry was taken to shochet in the synagogue. An old shochet with a long beard cut the fowl, hang it over the tub for the blood to trickle down and then gave it to me. He did it in line with kashrut rules.

I mostly was friends with my neighbors, among whom there were Jews and Lithuanians. We played different games which were typical for boys without thinking of nationality and origin. I do not remember a single case when someone would insult me because of my nationality I went to public Jewish school when I turned 6. It was not far from our house, so my parents chose it for me and my sister. Besides, it was free. It was elementary compulsory Yiddish school.