

Rita Vilkobrisckaya's Father Michael Vilkobrisckiy And Her Mother Bertha Vilkobrisckaya



My father Michael Vilkobrisckiy and my mother Bertha Vilkobrisckaya photographed on the day of their wedding in Minsk in 1929.

In 1929 my mother married Michael Vilkobrisckiy. At that time he had an important position in Minsk aviation regiment. They had a civil ceremony at a registry office and a wedding dinner at home in the evening. She wasn't in love with him, however, in due time she fell in love with him while he just adored her. The more my parents learned about one another the closer they became. They lived their life in love for 25 years.

I, was born on 28 October 1930. I got a Jewish name of Riva at the time of birth, but was always called Rita months after I was born my father was transferred to study in Leningrad [St. Petersburg at present] and we moved there: grandmother Hasia, father, mother, my half brother Ilia and I. My father studied at the Military Political Academy named after Lenin. My mother went to work at a big printing house and in 1932 she went to study at Rabfak school at the printing house. My older brother Ilia studied at school and I stayed home with grandmother Hasia. My grandmother always lived with our family and moved to all locations where my father got another assignment.

In 1934 upon graduation from the Academy my father was transferred to Eysk town near Rostov-on-the-Don (in Russian it sounds 'Rostov na Donu', it stands on the Don River) in 1000 km from Leningrad. My father was a commissar of a navy air squadron. My mother also went to work as organizer at this same unit: she taught young mothers housekeeping, childcare, cooking while grandmother took care of her own home. My mother joined the Party at this unit. We stayed in Eysk maximum half a year.

We didn't celebrate any Jewish holidays, I don't know whether there were other Jews around us, it didn't matter. I guess my grandmother that grew up in a small town where there was a strong Jewish community celebrated Jewish holidays before the revolution of 1917, but after the revolution she probably was afraid of damaging my father's reputation of devoted communist since he was a commissar of a big aviation unit. Grandmother Hasia spoke poor Russian and home my mother and

father spoke Yiddish with her. I wasn't taught Yiddish, though and Hasia tried to speak Russian to me.

Like many other families of the military we moved from one place to another so often that we left our suitcases unpacked at a new location. I didn't have time to get used to a new school or schoolmates when we had to move again. All military traveled a lot. They didn't discuss and obeyed orders from their commandment. We packed within three days and loaded our belongings on a truck to go to the new area.