

Agnessa Margolina With Her Brothers Shaya And Boris Margolin



This is a picture of me and my brothers. On my right is my younger brother, Shaya Margolin and my older brother, Boris Margolin, is on my left. The photo was taken in Kiev in 1935. I can vaguely remember my mother. When I was a bit over three years old she died at childbirth. This happened on 6th April 1924. The baby was stillborn. A year passed and then my father's sister Nenia took me to my father, who lived in Brovary, in the suburbs of Kiev. Nenia told me that I would have a new mother. That way I found out that my father had remarried. His second wife's name was Rasia. Neither my father nor stepmother had time to spend with me. My brother Boris was born in 1926. His Jewish name was Boruch. He was named after my grandfather, who was killed by bandits. My younger brother, Shaya, named after my father's younger brother, who was also killed, was born in 1928. Even after my brothers were born my stepmother still had to go to work. I became a baby-sitter for my brothers at the age of six. I was looking after them doing everything necessary. Both brothers called their mother 'Aunt Rasia' like I did. I'm used to calling them 'kids' and even now it's hard for me to call them 'brothers'. They are my 'kids'. In 1929 my father got a job as an accountant at the knitwear factory in Kiev and we moved there. I had to look after my brothers again since there was nobody else to do it. When I had to go to school my brothers went to kindergarten and elementary school. I went to the Ukrainian lower secondary school in the house next to ours. Almost half of my classmates were Jewish. There were also Jewish teachers. I had no opportunity to do homework at home. After classes I had work to do: take my brothers from elementary school and kindergarten, give them lunch and look after them. I also had to wash dishes and clean the apartment. There was hardly any time left to do homework. My brothers went to a Jewish school in Podol that had just opened then. It was far from where we lived, but we could take a tram to get there. The language of teaching was Yiddish, but that was the only difference to any other Soviet school. The school curriculum was the same for all schools. My brothers studied well. They had time to do their homework, which I didn't. They had almost all excellent marks in their school record book. In summer 1934 I finished the 7th grade. I didn't have an opportunity to continue my studies since I had to take care of my brothers. I went to work as an accounting clerk

at a shop making sheepskin coats. It was in Darnitsa, in the left bank district in Kiev. Commuting there was difficult especially in winter. I didn't have proper clothes and got cold. I worked there for three years until the father of my friend Feldman, who was the director of the Leather and Shoe Technical School at the shoe factory, offered me work at the factory. He said I could study at the school in the evening. I was eager to study and I went to work as an apprentice to a worker preparing raw work pieces. Employees of the factory could enter school without exams and I entered the Faculty of Shoe Production. There were many Jewish employees in the factory and many Jewish students in the school. I made friends at school. I rarely met with my former schoolmates. Many of them studied in colleges. They had new friends and new interests in life.