

Inna's Family: Parents Ilya Shif And Anastasia Shif, Grandfather Iosif Shif, Uncle Elkona Shif And His Wife Bella Zharkoy



In the front row of this picture are my Dad and Mom, Ilya Iosifovich Shif and Anastasia Nicolaevna Shif (nee Kuznetz). In the second row from left to right are my uncle Elkona Shif (my father's brother), my grandfather Iosif Shif, and my uncle's wife Bella Zharkoy. This snapshot was taken in July 1934 at a summer cottage near Leningrad in Sestroretsk - a resort on the shore of Gulf of Finland. My parents rented a summer cottage there, and Grandpa was visiting us from Minsk. My father was born in 1904 in Minsk. From 1911 until the Revolution [1917] he studied in a Jewish school in Minsk. From 1920 till 1926 he worked in Minsk as a worker. In 1926 he moved to his elder brother's in Leningrad, where he worked as a metalworker at the Metal plant and later was an accountant at the same plant. That's where he met my mother. My mother, Anastasia Nicolaevna Shif (nee Kuznetz) was born in 1902 in St. Petersburg. She didn't know her own family, other people brought her up, and I know nothing about her parents. Unfortunately, I don't know anything about how my parents met or about their wedding. At first they didn't have anywhere to live and rented a tiny room. But after two years a room in the flat where Dad's brother [Elkona] was living become vacant, and my parents took it. That is where I was born in 1933. We lived together in the same flat with my uncle's family until the war broke out in 1941. My father's elder brother Elkona Shif was born in 1890. He moved to Leningrad after the Revolution. He was a highly educated person and studied in Berlin until 1917. He worked as an economist in Moscow and for a few years before the war was a bank executive in Leningrad. He had great authority and even after he fell ill with Parkinson's Disease, the bank used him as a consultant and sent employees to his home to ask his opinion. During the war he was evacuated to Sverdlovsk. His wife, Bella Solomonovna Shif, a doctor, was drafted into the army and later transferred to a hospital to Sverdlovsk. Uncle Elkona

died in 1953. When Uncle Elkona got sick, not only my mother, but I, too, had to nurse him, as he was totally bedridden. He taught me a lot about my Jewish identity. He told me family stories, and from these I learned a lot about my grandmother, about my aunts, and about their children. He say so directly, but I now realize that he made clear nonetheless that everything that was happening in our country was unrighteous. I took care of him and talked to him a lot, and I am obliged to him for the awareness that I am a Jew.