

Sima Shvarts With Her Cousins



This is me with my cousins during our stay at my paternal grandfather's house in Rzhishev. I am lying in front. The girl with lace collar is Bronya Shvartser; the girl in the white dress with a ball is Hanna. I don't remember the rest. Hanna's mother is standing on the right. The photo was taken in 1926 in Rzhishev. My father's parents had a better life financially than my mother's parents. My father's father owned a business that dealt with the loading and unloading of goods to and from ships that docked in Rzhishev. Grandfather's name was Mordko Shvarts, and grandmother's name was Rakhil Shvarts. I remember the house of my father's parents because mother took me there for the summer holidays when we were already living in Kiev. There was a large thoroughfare in Rzhishev that led to the market, and the main square in the town was a market, where all people came together. Grandfather's house stood in a small street right next to that thoroughfare. My grandfather gathered all of them for summer holidays. They had a big house with an orchard, and children were delighted to spend their summer holidays there. Of all the children I was the only girl who went to school. The rest were too young, as far as I remember. Grandfather gathered not only his grandchildren, but also his daughters and daughters-in-law, who brought their children to him. There was enough room for everyone. He had a very good orchard. Grandfather loved us very much, so he allowed us to pick the flowers and eat all the fruit. I remember that we felt wonderful at his house because both grandfather and grandmother were very kind people. My father's parents were also religious. They kept the laws of kashrut and always celebrated Sabbath. I remember how grandmother lit candles [on Friday night] and grandfather prayed. When they had to go to the table, he also went to the dining room and prayed there. Even though he taught us to believe in God, we often mocked him and laughed, unfortunately. That is why he would turn his back on us, pray looking in the other direction, then sit at the head of the table with all of us around the table, and grandmother would bring food. My grandparents always went to the synagogue - it was like a law for them. I know that grandmother said she had to go up to the second floor where all the women prayed, while grandfather stayed on the first floor. I also remember that I told her that it was unfair, that grandmother should stay on the first floor because it was easier for her. And they laughed at me. The synagogue was a sacred place because mostly

Jews lived in that town. The Ukrainians who lived in Rzhishev highly respected the Shvarts family because they were very kind people. Their house was always open to whoever wished to come in. Sometimes old, poor people would come in, and grandmother would never throw them out, no matter what their origin was (Jewish or Gentile). First of all she would feed them at the table. That is why our families were so highly respected in the community.