

Beile Ronder And Her Cousin Mina Ronder



This is my sister Beile Ronder and our cousin Mina Ronder, daughter of my father's brother Yudel Ronder, The picture was made in Kedainiai in 1926.

I was born in Lithuanian town Kedainiai [about 100 km to the west from Vilnius] In 1920s-1930s it was a small district town. The population was a little bit over three thousands, two thirds out of which were Jews. There were strong Jewish traditions in town.

My father cultivated cucumbers and sold them wholesale. I do not know for sure how my parents met, but I think they had a prearranged marriage. In 1898 my parents got married in chuppah in the main synagogue of Kedainia. There were a lot of guests at the wedding, Jewish musicians. In word, it was a true Jewish wedding.

In a year, in 1899 my eldest brother Abel was born and in 1902 -David, in 1904 - Mordechai, in 1906 - Leibl, in 1910 - Menachem, in 1912 - Benjamin, and in 1914 - the only sister Beile.

The house, where I was born, was one-storied long building made by grandfather Leibl, which was practically out of town, close to the gardens. I vaguely remember that place. When the family was getting larger (practically all my brothers, beside my single brother Menachem, Leibl, who left for Argentine and Morduchai who left for Meriampol) brought their wives in our house. Then started having children, there was less and less room. Then mother sold the old house and bought another one in the downtown. It was kind of angular, two-winged, two storied wooden house like most Lithuanian houses. There were seven rooms, a large kitchen, where the whole family met at dinner in the evening.. Our family was neither rich nor poor. We had a modest living, but had all necessary things my mother and brothers worked very hard. They did not have easy bread.

Beila was beautiful. She got a good education - she graduated from Lithuanian lyceum. She was well educated and erudite. Beile married a rich Jew, grain trader Feivel Shishanskiy. I loved their little daughter Iona very much. I tendered her. Beila's family was also shot by fascists during one of the first actions in Kedainiai.

Father had siblings and all I know about them is that they left for South Africa. I only knew about father's elder brother Yudel. He was born in the early 1870s and died one year before I was born. I was named after him. I do not remember his wife either. She perished in ghetto. Yudel's daughters Mina and Beile left for Palestine in 1934 with their numerous offspring. Mina had lived in Haifa all life long. She died in 1990. Beile remained single. She passed away in the 1980s. Yudel's son Chaim Ronder was a close person for me. During occupation he managed to run away from ghetto and had been in hiding and he was by a hair's breadth of death. In 1943 he happened to be in a partisan squad, which entered liberated Vilnius. Chaim died in couple of years after war. She was still very young. Yudel's younger son Aba perished in ghetto.