

Igor Lerner, His Father And Mother



This photograph taken in 1939 in Olgino shows my father, my mother and me. Here I'd like to tell you about my father.

My father Haim Davidovich Lerner was born in Krivoie Ozero in 1896. In his childhood he attended cheder, and that was all regarding his education. Father participated in the World War I and got into the phosgene area. [Phosgene is the highly toxic gas gained infamy as a chemical weapon during the World War I.] After that he got asthma and coughed all the time. Having returned from the front, Daddy at first worked in the field, but later became a shop manager. The shop was situated in our house (I told you that the house was very large). I guess that parents paid some rent for it. At the shop they sold mainly fabric, which was in short supply at that time. I had a photo showing my father with a folding rule in his hands, he was standing in front of the shop (unfortunately I lost the photograph). At that time our financial situation was not bad.

Here I'll tell you about my father's life. By the beginning of the Great Patriotic War he was already 40 years old, therefore he was not drafted. But he served as a hospital attendant in a hospital in Leningrad. He left for the hospital and we never saw him any more. We sent numerous inquiries and they answered that father was registered neither among victims, nor among reported missing. Many years later I got ill with dermatitis and went to the nearest polyclinic to visit a dermatologist. She looked at me attentively and asked 'Are you a son of Haim Davidovich?' It turned out that during the war she worked in the hospital together with my father. From her I got to know that one day all men who worked in the hospital were sent to the front line, presumably to Tikhvin region. Most likely he perished there.

My Mom's name was Hayka Borissovna (nee Fleymboym). She was born in 1896 in Krivoie Ozero, in the same place where my father was born. I do not know for sure, but I guess that my parents knew each other since their childhood. I do not remember when they got married, but I know for sure that they were married under chuppah.

Mom also studied only in cheder, but she was much more educated than father. She knew Hebrew very well and was interested in Jewish history. Many interesting facts from the history of our people I got to know from her in my childhood. Yiddish was my mother tongue, mother tongue of my parents, and of my grandparents, too. Before the war we spoke only Yiddish at home.

Father was not very religious, but till the very beginning of the war he kept tefillin and tallit in the special trunk. Mom kept 2 thick prayer books (in Hebrew) till her death. She also did her best to observe kashrut. Even in Leningrad she managed to buy kosher meat somewhere. When she was about 70 years old, she decided to live separately from my family. I guess that one her reasons was her wish to eat according Tradition. All her life long she celebrated Sabbath, made matzot herself (when it was not possible to be bought). I remember that we moved to Leningrad on Saturday, and not all her belongings had been transported: Mom's candlesticks were absent. She cut a potato in two and attached candles to the halves. Mom died in Leningrad in 1983. She was never sick; she even never visited a doctor.

Here I'll tell you about brothers and sisters of my parents. My Mom had got 4 brothers and a sister. Brothers' names were Abram, Moyshe, Haim, Benye. The sister's name was Buya. They lived in different cities: Tashkent, Kuybyshev, Leningrad, Kiev, and Odessa. Mom corresponded with all of them. According to Jewish Tradition all elder boys in their families were named in honor of my Mom's father who was lost during the World War I. His name was Boris, therefore I had got 5 cousins named Boris each. All of them (except my elder brother) were killed at the WWII front line.

Father had got a sister, her name was Hinye. She lived in Ukraine. She had got a husband and a daughter Rivva. Rivva was married to a Ukrainian guy. After the end of the war she worked as a school director. During the war relatives of Rivva's husband hid her from Germans. Unfortunately Germans executed Hinye and her husband by shooting.

I am the youngest son in our family. I had got 2 elder brothers: Boris (born in 1921) and Jacob (born in 1923). I was born in 1925 and my parents called me Israel. Later I changed it for Igor (I'll tell you about it a little bit later).