

Asia Matveyuk



This is me, Asia Leikind. This photo was taken in Nikolaev in 1935 on my sixteenth birthday. On this day my father took me to the town to buy a new dress and celebrate this day. We walked and visited our relatives, bought gifts and sweets and went back home.

I was born in March 1919. I was named Asia for the first letter in my name was the same as in the name of my father's brother Arkadiy who had perished during a pogrom. My mother died in 1924. Since my brother and I lived with grandmother Zisel and grandfather Zelman for a whole year. They were very kind people and loved us a lot. A year later my father married my grandmother's niece Freida. Her father Ruvim Grinker was grandmother Zisel's stepbrother. Freida's first husband Abram Girshel' died. She had a son named Samuel. He was the same age with me. My father and Freida registered their marriage in 1925. We moved in with Freida with our father. The big stone house had five rooms and a big kitchen. Later they leased a part of the house and we stayed in two rooms. There was no electricity and food was cooked in a Russian stove. In 1927 Freida gave birth to a girl named Braina. Freida was a kind and nice woman and never distinguished between her own children and her stepchildren and I began to call her 'mama'.

I went to the Jewish 7-year school in 1926. Actually, it was a merge of the Jewish and Ukrainian 7-year schools: we had many common classes since there were not so many children in the town and Ukrainian and Jewish children spoke two languages fluently. We spoke Yiddish at home and Ukrainian and Yiddish to our friends. There was no anti-Semitism. We liked strolling in the Jewish, Ukrainian and German parts of our village. I had Jewish, Ukrainian and German friends. My friend Martha taught me German. I became a pioneer and then joined Komsomol at school. We liked

parades on Soviet holidays. There were parties and meetings at school. We celebrated 7 November and 1 May at home.

In our village was a new club building constructed in the center of the village where young people from the whole colony got together in the evening to dance and socialize. The people were joyful and the village looked revived. Many young people from our colony were studying in colleges in Odessa, Nikolaev and Kherson. They came to the village on vacation that summer. We danced, listened to the radio and watched movies.

In summer 1934 I finished school and my parents sent me to my mother's sisters in Lugansk to continue my education. I was drawn to medicine since childhood and I could watch pharmacists making medications in the pharmacy across the street from our house for hours. I entered a Medical School in Lugansk. I lived in a hostel.