

Frida Shatkina With Her Mother Reizl Shatkina, Brother Abram Shatkhin And Her Uncle Haim's Wife Riva Rozenberg With Her Relative



This is a family picture. From left to right: Riva Rozenberg, my uncle Haim's wife, my mother Reizl Shatkina, me, my brother Abram Shatkhin, Riva's relative. This photo was taken in Chernevtsy in 1936.

My mother's family lived in the Jewish town of Chernevtsy. Of all my mother's relatives I only knew her older brother, Haim Rozenberg, who lived with his wife Riva and their three children in Chernevtsy. Haim owned a small fabric store. However, this store must have been profitable. Haim was considered to be a wealthy man. My mother, Reizl Rozenberg, was born in 1886. She told me she came from a big family, but I didn't know any of her brothers or sisters.

I don't know any details about how my parents met. I think there could have been matchmakers involved. Even when I was in my teens, all weddings were prearranged by shadkhanim, if both young people lived in the same town. Borovka is located in about 15 kilometers from Chernevtsy. My parents had a traditional Jewish wedding in Chernevtsy. Afterward my mother put on a wig.

In 1912 my older brother Boruch – Boris in Russian – was born. I was born in 1914. I was named Frida after one of my grandmothers – I don't remember which of them. In 1916 my second brother Abram was born. My younger sister Betia was born in 1919. My parents observed Jewish traditions, and both their sons were circumcised, as required.

Hard times came with the famine in the 1930s. My acquaintance in Chernevtsy was a communication operator at the post office. He said I could get some training to become a telephone operator. Mama, my younger brother and sister moved to Chernevtsy. We rented two

small rooms and a kitchen from a local woman. She was a single older Jewish woman. She lived in her house in one room.

My acquaintance helped me to get a job at the post office. It didn't take me long to learn the job of a telephone operator. There was no automatic dialing at that time. Telephone operators worked manually. There was nothing hard about this job, as long as we were attentive. I received salary and occasional food packages: flour, cereal, sunflower oil.

My brother Abram also went to work at the post office, and was trained to be a communication operator. A Vinnitsa communication school affiliate opened in Chernevtsy and my brother went to study there by correspondence. After finishing this school he was offered a job in 'Spetssviaz' [special communication] at the NKVD office. His office was responsible for installation and maintenance of special communication cables.