

Faina Melamed And Her Friend Lina



This is me, Faina Melamed, and my friend Lina. This photo was taken in Samarkand in 1939.

I was born in Odessa on 25 February 1929. During famine in 1932 my father was sent to work in Samarkand in Uzbekistan. We traveled by train. I don't know exactly what his work was about, but he had to work a lot. Before the Great Patriotic War he was director of a bakery.

In Samarkand we lived in the neighborhood of Buchara Jews and my father spoke Hebrew with them because they want to. [Buchara Jews spoke a Farce dialect, Faina's father spoke Yiddish, therefore, the only language they could communicate in was Hebrew, the language of the Torah.] We were accommodated in the house owned by a woman, who also living there. There was a big verandah and a basement in her house. We lodged in three rooms: bedroom, dining room and a long narrow room that was like a corridor - the children slept in it. The walls were whitewashed and there were photographs and portraits on them. There were stone floors that we rubbed with a metal scraper until it became yellow. There was a big oak table in the dining room where our family got together on holidays. There were nickel-plated beds with ironclad base. There was a wardrobe with a mirror in my parents' bedroom. It was a most valuable piece in our home. We had a Buchara-type kitchen. There was a fireplace in the center and everything was baked and cooked on the floor. It was a pit of about 20 cm deep with coal in it. There was a U-brick stand. On Sabbath coal was put in this pit. It smoldered in the pit and kept warmth through Saturday. Buchara Jews cooked delicious food and we borrowed their recipes. (I used to do my cooking in Buchara manner, but not any more.)

My childhood was quiet. I didn't go to kindergarten. My brother Boris and sister Esfir looked after me when my parents were at work. I went to school in 1936. I can hardly remember my first teacher. I remember that it was hard for me at school. My brother and sister studied in this same school. They were good at school and from the first days of my studies my teachers kept telling me

that I should be as good as they and try as hard as they to be the best. And I was a fidget! I wanted to be different from them and was often naughty. I did well with my studies, but I wasn't as assiduous or industrious as my sister. My mother worked at the knitwear factory and didn't have time to spend with us. I got along well with my brother and sister and we were close friends. This is how we were growing up.