

Vladimir Slopak's Uncle Lev Portnoy And Aunt Sopha Portnaya



My uncle Lev Portnoy and my aunt Sopha Portnaya in Odessa in 1939.

My mother's brother Lev was born in 1912. He studied in the Soviet Jewish secondary school. He sold meat at the New Market. He was married and had a Russian wife. Her name was Vera. I remember that my aunts didn't like them. I don't think it was based on her nationality. They had no children. In 1941 he served in the people's volunteer corps. He worked in Dofinovka, a village in 30 km from Odessa, making defense trenches. They didn't have any weapons. I was a small boy, but I remember that people were returning from the frontline telling us that there was one rifle for five of them. They were told to get weapons in the battle. After Odessa was occupied by the Germans he returned home. When raids for Jew began his wife Vera gave him in to Germans. He was sent to the ghetto where he perished. After the occupation the neighbors told the whole story to us.

My mother's younger sister Sopha was born in 1920. She also studied in a Russian secondary school. During the war she was in evacuation in Kutaissi in Georgia where she married Moshe Shneiderman (born in 1910). On 26 May 1945 her son Ilia, my cousin, was born. Sopha divorced her husband in 1946 and lived the rest of her life with her son in Odessa. She worked as a ticket collector at the cultural center and in the 1970s she got a job at the Musical Comedy Theater where she worked until the end of her life. My last aunt, Sopha, died in 1987. Sopha and her sisters, Anna and Fira, were buried in the Jewish cemetery. It was their will to be buried near one another to be together for good.