

Lev Khapun's Grandmother Lyubov Gutkina And His Aunt Vera Zakhterova



I keep this picture in my family album. I do not know exactly when and under which circumstances it was taken.

It looks like my grandmother and my aunt Vera were going for a walk in the park in Odessa; it was a custom at that time.

A photographer worked in the park and they decided to have their picture taken. It is a pre-war picture taken in the 1930s. They are wearing typical clothes of that time.

My grandmother, Lyubov Rafailovna Gutkina, nee Zakhterova [1885-1967] had long thick hair, and she always had a beautiful hair-do. She began to wear head scarves in her elderly age. She put them on in a Russian manner and tied them under her chin.

She came from a prosperous family. Almost all her relatives had left for America. She fell in love with grandfather and wasn't able to leave for America, since she stayed with her husband. She got married, first a son was born and then my mother. All in all she had five daughters; her son died.

She fed the tailors who worked at her husband's tailor workshops, because they worked long hours and had no time to go out to eat. She cooked lunch for them. From that time the following joke survived: Those Jews, who worked at the cooperative, were always very hungry.

When my grandmother gave them lunch, she had to bring bread, then the first course and then the second course. Once she brought some bread and went to get the first course. When she returned she saw that there wasn't a bread crumb left on the table.

So she went to get some more bread. She brought more bread and left again to bring the first course. When she returned, there was not a single piece of bread ... and then her little daughter began to pull her skirt, and my grandmother, strung-up with the situation, told her, 'Stop that or I'll put you on the table.'

In 1918 grandfather died of typhus. Grandmother was left with four or five children in Odessa without any livelihood. The Civil War [1918-1921] was at its height.

My mother was 13 years old. Grandmother had a sister in Vinnitsa. They exchanged letters and grandmother moved to Vinnitsa with the children. When she came to Vinnitsa, she stayed with her sister Sonya with the children for some time, but soon realized that she had to live on her own.

They lived poorly and had to work. My mother and her sister Vera went to work; I don't remember what they did. My grandmother's third daughter entered a college and became an obstetrician and the fourth daughter became an economist.

Later their condition improved but it was very difficult at first.