

Vladimir Olgart's Mother Neha Olgart



My mother, Neha Olgart, when she came from Skvira to visit my brother Mikhail, my sister Riva and me in 1965. I took this picture of her in my sister's apartment. My mother's parents lived in Volodarka, a small town in Kiev province. I have no information about them. They both died before my mother, Neha Olgart, turned 15. My mother was born in 1887. She got married to my father when she was 17. My father was much older than my mother. He was over 30 when they got married. I think my father didn't get married at an earlier age because he had to take care of his father. My mother was an orphan and had no dowry. She and my father were married by matchmakers. They had a traditional Jewish wedding with a chuppah and a rabbi in Skvira. My parents were religious people and raised us accordingly. We spoke Yiddish at home, but we also spoke fluent Ukrainian and Russian. Every Friday my mother cooked for Sabbath. She baked challah in the Russian oven, made stuffed fish and boiled chicken. It wasn't allowed to cook or heat food on Saturday. On Friday evening our family got together for a prayer. My mother lit candles

and we sat down at the table for a Saturday meal. Our Ukrainian neighbor used to light our kerosene lamps and make fire in the stove on Saturdays in the winter. My father prayed at home on Sabbath and he read a chapter from the Torah to us, and then we had guests over. My father's cousins lived in Skvira and so did my mother's brother Dudik before he moved to Kiev in the 1920s. They visited us with their wives and children. They all had big families. We had a lot of fun. We had tea, cookies and sponge cakes that my mother made. We sang Jewish songs, recited poems and danced. My parents had a record player and records with Jewish songs and dance music. We used to dance Jewish folk dances: sher, freilakhs and skotchna. We also got together at birthdays. My parents went to the synagogue on holidays. In the early 1960s my mother had her leg amputated. She had gangrene. My brother and I were helping my sister Sonia to look after her. My mother died in 1967. We buried her in the Jewish section of Baikovoye cemetery according to Jewish tradition. There was also a rabbi from the synagogue at the funeral. The Jewish cemetery in Kiev had been destroyed by that time.