

Genrikh Len With His Father And Grandmother



From left to right: grandmother Golda, I, my father Yakov Len.

I am 12 years old, grandmother is 65, father is 40, he was to get married for the third time soon. It's summertime. We are having rest on a bench in a park.

My grandmother's name is Golda Yankelevna Sorkinà, nee Kagan. She was born in Belorussia in the small town of Krupki of Tolochin district in 1885. It was a large Jewish family (7 or 8 children). She received religious education in this town, finished a cheder, and considered Yiddish her native language.

She could read and write Yiddish, also knew Belorussian and, living in Russia afterwards, studied Russian as well, so she could read newspapers and write letters. She loved to read all her life and respected educated people. Grandmother lived with her parents for quite a long time.

She got married rather late, and gave birth to her first child, my mother Tsiva, in 1912, that is at 27 years of age; then there were two more children, who died in infancy, and son Alexander (Alter) was born in 1920. She kept the house, brought up children and helped the family of her brother Girsha, who died in 1912.

My father, Yakov Naumovich Len, was born in Poland in the small town of Vogyn of Radzynsky district in 1910. In the Polish documents he was registered as Yankel Itskhak Len.

He moved with his parents to Russia as a child in 1916 and lived at first in Samara and then in Leningrad.

His family supported his aspiration to acquire education. He entered the philosophical faculty of the Leningrad State University in 1934. Before university he was a fitter, worked for 2-3 years as a worker.

When he was a student of the 3rd year, philosophical faculty was liquidated for "sedition" [anticommunist dissident activity]. Students were offered to shift to the 3rd year of historical faculty, or to the 1st year of physical department.

Father chose the latter, which was why it took him so long to complete his studies - 7 years. During training he taught physics in an evening school.