

Rebecca Levina With Her Friends



This photo was taken in 1941 in Bologoye.

Here you can see me and my friends Anna Alperovich (we are still big friends, she studied at the school in Bologoye, then she moved to Leningrad. She became a doctor, now she is retired. Her son Igor grew up together with my daughter Elena, and Elena's best friend Irina became his second wife), Bertha Finkelshtein and some of the Parmit brothers. It was taken on our graduation evening, on 17th June 1941, and the Great Patriotic War started four days after. Anna and Bertha stayed alive, and all three Parmit brothers (they were Jewish too) were killed on the front.

They started school at the age of eight in those times. I studied in the eleventh railways' school. That was a Russian school; there were no Jewish schools in Bologoye. I liked to study, and studied well. I liked Mathematics as I had very good memory, Russian, Literature, and foreign language - we had German, and I didn't like History and Physics.

But though I didn't like Physics I liked our Physics' teacher very much. At the elementary school I had another favorite teacher, and she predicted my life, she always told my mother, 'She'll be a linguist, she should be a linguist.' It is weird, I had abilities in Math, and I turned to Philology. And my brother was an engineer his whole life. We had some Jews in our class: Bertha Finkelshtein, and then Anna Alperovich switched to our class too, maybe, some more people; I can't recall exactly who studied in my class and who didn't. But I wasn't the only Jewish girl for sure.

Together with Anna Matveevna [Alperovich] - my friend - I studied in a theater studio. Apparently, I wanted to be an actress or a teacher, I played with girls from my very childhood only the 'theater' game, or the 'school' game, and I always wanted to be the teacher. And I wanted to apply for the Theater Institute. I played music, but we didn't have a piano at home, that's why I dropped my music studies. I studied with some teacher, not from our school. So I know notes and even play something. Also I studied drama and sang in the choir of the House of Pioneers. As a child, I read a lot, but never liked sports.

As school children, we went to Moscow and Leningrad by train. Once we, my brother and I, had to go on our own: Father was ill, and he stayed in Leningrad together with Mom, while we left because the school year had begun. Of course, we were both afraid and happy to go on our own. Afraid because we were little children and the railway seemed to be something dangerous, and happy to travel without adults, without our parents. But nothing happened, fortunately, we came to Bologoye without any adventures.

I liked to dance very much. We had dancing lessons at school, in the eighth grade. In summer girls went for dances in the park. Also we organized school parties at someone's house. There were girls who lived in large apartments, their parents let them invite guests, and we danced and celebrated the holidays. And I remember that once we danced till four or even five o'clock in the morning, and when I was going back home, I met my mother, who was trying to find me. She walked in the street, and I suppose that she decided to come to this party and take me home. So I was lucky that I remembered what time it was and walked home myself. We met just half-way.