

Beila Gabis's Husband Motia Gabis With His Friends



This photograph was taken at a prom party in a grammar school in Khotin in 1940. My husband and his friends performing on stage. A young man in the center plays Goddess Themis. My husband Motia Gabis is the third from the right.

[Beila met her future husband in the ghetto.] In July 1941 we were taken to the ghetto of Bershad: few streets were fenced with barbed wire. We stayed in our house. Life behind bars was terrible. In few weeks Romanian troops took command in the ghetto: our ghetto became a part of Transnistria.

Once Eva who lived in our house came home with an acquaintance of hers, a young man from Yedintsy town [today Moldova] where the girl also came from. His name was Motia Gabis. He told us his story. He was born in Yedintsy in 1921. His father owned a buttry and his mother was a teacher of the Russian language. His father Ouri and Motia also finished a grammar school. In 1940 the Soviet regime [16](#) was established and Motia had to go to a secondary school to obtain a certificate to be able to enter a college. When the Great Patriotic War began the Gabis family failed to evacuate. When fascists came to Yedintsy Dmitri Bogutsak, Moldavian neighbor of the Gabis family, came to shoot Motia's family. Eva hiding in her house saw this happening. Motia's father and mother fell and then fell Motia, wounded, and then Ouri fell. Eva decided they were all dead. She was astounded to meet Motia in the ghetto in Gershad. Motia and my brother were lucky since their wounds were not lethal. Bullets only tore their clothes and made some scratches on them. They stayed quiet until night when they came to their friends' house where they got first aid. After they recovered they had to stay in hiding. Motia and his brother got to Ukraine concealing their identity. Fascists captured them and sent to the 'Dead Loop' death camp. Motia and Ouri escaped from there, too. They kept hiding in Ukrainian villages. From what Motia told us I understood that our relatives Menachem's wife and their children gave shelter to them. They stayed with my aunt until they got stronger. Later I joked that my uncle's wife heated up a husband for me! Motia and

his brother Ouri were taken to the construction of a bridge in Nikolaev. Their work conditions were very hard. They slept in pits they excavated themselves. Almost all of them died at this construction.

I didn't like Motia at first sight. He was wearing torn trousers and a ragged jacket. My mother and I were undoing old carpets for yarn and knitting woolen socks for sale. Motia started helping me. My mother liked Motia at once. She wanted to take Motia to live with us, but was afraid of rumors: he was a young man and I was a young woman... Then Eva said 'Why doesn't Beila marry Motia?' I didn't quite accept this idea. Motia visited us every evening. Once he said that if I married him I would never regret it, that he would care about me and we would have a good life. I agreed: not because I loved him, but because I felt sorry for him. He was very happy and kept telling everybody about the forthcoming wedding. There was a rabbi in the group of Moldavian Jews. He conducted the ceremony of engagement in accordance with Jewish traditions. This happened in late 1942.