

Anna Gliena's Family



Our family. From left to right: my brother Osher, sister Bella, my mother Rosa Gliena, my father Samuel Gliena holding my little brother Israel. Half a year after this photo was taken Bella and Israel died, and this is the only picture of them. This photo was made in Kharkov in 1915.

My father Samuel Gliena was born in this small town near Warsaw in 1885. He left for Warsaw on foot when he turned 14. He became an apprentice of a shoemaker for 'food and accommodation'. My father learned to make shoes and boots within 2-3 years. He got his own clients and began to dress up to fashion and pay attention to girls. In 1904 Samuel Gliena met a bright young girl

traveling from London. It was love at first sight. My mother stayed in Warsaw and moved in with my father in his basement. They got married shortly afterward. They had a wedding in Warsaw. They had a traditional Jewish wedding with a chuppah and a rabbi from the nearest synagogue. Everybody admired the beauty of the bride and my father always worshipped my mother ever after.

1905 was an uneasy year with continuous clashes between Poles and Ukrainians, Ukrainians and Jews and there were revolutionary ideas in the air. Somebody advised my father to move to Kharkov. They said it was quieter and easier to find a job there. The newly weds moved to Kharkov and rented an apartment in Goncharovka Street. My father got a job in a shoe shop. The owner of the shop was a Jew. He closed his shop on Saturday and Jewish holidays. In 1918 the shop where my father worked was converted into a factory. My father worked a lot and when he came home in the evening he continued working: he was fixing shoes for all neighbors. My father was a kind man and couldn't refuse anybody. My mother was a housewife. They observed Jewish traditions and celebrated holidays. My mother followed kashrut when cooking, but I wouldn't call my family deeply religious. My father didn't wear a kippah and shave his beard, but he had a moustache. My mother only covered her hair when going to the synagogue on Pesach and Yom Kippur. However, mother lit candles every Friday before Sabbath. She put on a kerchief and prayed over candles. Each time she mentioned that this was how her mother used to do it and that beautiful silver candlesticks were the only thing she got from her parents. These candlesticks disappeared during the Great Patriotic War.

In 1909 my older brother Osher was born. Later he began to be called with a Russian name of Roman. A year later in 1910 Bella was born and in 1914 Israel was born.

My mother told me that Bella was a very sweet girl. She was a very clean girl and when my mother had a headache she closed shutters on the windows saying 'Mother, you go lie down and I shall wash dishes and clean up'. Bella died of scarlet fever at the age of 5. My brother Israel also died at that time. He had a bloody flux. My mother was in hospital with Bella and the little boy was in his nanny's care. He must have grabbed something from the floor and eaten it that caused the bloody flux. Bella and Israel died in 1915 and were buried at the Jewish cemetery in accordance with the Jewish traditions. My parents often went to the cemetery and my father used to take me there, too. I remember that their graves were by a wall and there were boards with their names in Yiddish on the graves.

I was born in 1917. My mother was very weak and sickly and had migraines. She hired a nanny to look after me. My nanny's name was Anna Grigorenko. She was a Ukrainian woman. She spoke beautiful Ukrainian and sang Ukrainian songs. My mother and father spoke Yiddish. I picked up Yiddish and Ukrainian. Since Russian is spoken much in Kharkov I picked up Russian, too.