

Emilia Kotliar's Grandmother Leya Vaisman



My grandmother Leya is in this photograph.

This photo was taken in Stavysche town in 1940. At this time she worked as the cook in a collective-farm dining room. The photo was made by uncle Shahná who came to parents on a visit.

Grandmother Leya had a hard childhood. She grew up having no mother and was responsible for the housework and raising her younger sisters and brothers.

Leya had to marry Isaac Vaisman, my grandfather, who was as poor as she was. This happened approximately in 1900. Of course, they had a traditional wedding and it couldn't have been

otherwise at that time. Grandmother Leya and grandfather Isaac settled down in Stavishche town near Vasilkov after their wedding.

Before the revolution of 1917 grandmother Leya owned a store selling her products on credit for peanuts. She sold salt, matches, soap and herring. Villagers from a neighboring village liked doing shopping in Leya's store. She even sold on credit to those who didn't pay back their old debts.

When Jewish pogroms began Ukrainian families gave shelter to Leya's family and rescued her children. At their old age my grandmother and grandfather worked in a kolkhoz.

My grandfather was a janitor and my grandmother worked in a kolkhoz canteen. They lived in a small clay house. There was a living room and a table covered with a fancy white tablecloth, a mirror and scarlet ribbon along the table serving as a decoration. There was a bed for guests in the living room. My grandparents slept in a corner in the kitchen.

Grandmother Leya and grandfather Isaac had 8 children. Four children died in infancy and four survived. Grandmother Leya was very much attached to her father Vigdor and often left her home to visit him. Can you imagine what it was like when she came back home?

When she returned the house was a mess and the children were hungry. She would have cuffed one in his nap and kick another. Shortly before the Great Patriotic War my mother's younger sister Sophia Goloborodko took my grandfather and grandmother to live with her family in Uman [180 km from Kiev].

Grandfather Isaac died there in 1943 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery. After the war grandmother Leya lived in Uman. She died in 1950 and was buried in the Jewish sector of the town cemetery in Uman.