

Semyon Vilenskiy's Mother Maria Vilenskaya



My mother Maria Vilenskaya (nee Belenkaya). This photo was taken in 1919 in Moscow shortly before she got married. Mama died in 1942. Papa kept this photo as the only memory of her.

Mama came from a very poor family. Before 1913 they lived in Snovsk town Chernihov region [180 km east of Kiev]. My mother's older brother Zinoviy Belenkiy entered the Philological Faculty of Moscow University in 1911 or 1912. In 1915 my mother's family moved to Moscow. My uncle Zinoviy Belenkiy supported them. They rented a small apartment in Moscow. My mother's brothers and sisters finished a gymnasium in Moscow. Then they got married and moved to various towns. I don't know the names of my mother's brothers or sisters.

Papa and mama met in Moscow. Papa was a friend of mama's brother Grigoriy. Grigoriy was a financial officer during the Soviet period. Papa visited Grigoriy at his home. They got married in 1919. My parents just had a civil ceremony in the registry office.

After the gymnasium my mother finished a 2-year dentistry course, but she never worked. She got married and became a housewife. She looked after the children and papa often went on business and was rarely home. After my parents got married my father received two rooms in a 4-bedroom communal apartment in the center of Moscow. The building was constructed in 1914. It's still their, an old house. There was a sculpture of a knight at the entrance. I was born here in 1928. In 1920 my sister Bertha was born. Mama was a real Jewish mama. I grew up healthy thanks to mama. She was a great housewife. She was very fond of music, and she raised me to love songs and literature. She was a good friend. I remember, when in 1937 many of her friends' husbands were arrested, she helped them with consolation and money.

Mama and papa had a good life before the war raising their children and meeting with friends and relatives. The family got together with grandmother and grandfather to celebrate Jewish holidays. My parents, their relatives and friends gave up their parents' religion and traditions. They were atheists.

In 1941 my mama was seriously ill, she had a mental disorder and had to stay in hospital. Mama died in a hospital in Moscow in 1942. None of us was in Moscow at the time. My sister's friend buried her. We didn't find her grave after the war.