

Zinaida Khomenko (née Zaznobina).

Zinaida (Zina) was born in Leningrad on June 3, 1928.

Childhood memories include:

Yaroslavl region - the birthplace of her father, Pavel Zaznobin. He was born in Russian Orthodox family. Zina remembers visiting her aunt and uncle.

Orsha - a small cottage next to a mountainside – the place where her mother, Sara, maiden name Raskina, was born. Sara's parents were Orthodox Jews.

Leningrad - an amazing school - the former Tsarskoselky Lyceum moved to Leningrad. Amazing teachers of literature and mathematics.

Friends, games, trips on foot to the Hermitage. And at night - fear, rings and knocks on neighbors' doors, repressions. (**Note:** this was the result of state-sponsored repressions by Josef Stalin – famous “purges” of the late 1930's) some friends gone, those who remained, felt derelict. Their parents were called “enemies of the people”.

War memories include:

When war started, Zina was at the summer house. She returned to Leningrad. Zina and her friends were on duty on roofs – they extinguished flares dropped by enemy planes. School was converted into a hospital. Children were going to visit the wounded.

In June 26, 1941 Zina's father voluntarily enrolled to the people's militia of Dzerzhinsky district of Leningrad. Before leaving, he told Zina's mother to leave Leningrad because Jews couldn't stay due to the danger posed by the invading German army.

In September 1941 siege of Leningrad started.

End of October - beginning of November 1941. Zina and her mother with other people left toward the village Lychkovo, district of Old Rus. When they arrived at the Old Rus train station, the station was bombed. Only 150 persons out of 240 from their train survived. The day after, they left for Kirov region and ended up in the village of Prokopenko of the Belokholunitsky District and settled at the orphanage. Zina's mother, Sarah Abramovna, was the only Jewish person there. Moreover, she was disabled. Still, she began working there as a night nurse. Anti-Semitism manifested itself immediately. After a while, Zina's mother found a job in Kirov and left the orphanage.

Hunger, cold, lack of electricity, hatred from the locals, who considered the children as kids of those from the cities who “de-kulakized” them (**Note:** in villages, in early 1920's the communists started confiscate the land and possessions of farmers and then often deported them with their families. Most of the officials who did this were from cities). Nevertheless, Zina with her friends helped families of the soldiers by harvesting firewood, washing, cleaning. The children went into the forest collecting berries and mushrooms, then dried them; repeatedly were threatened by bears and wolves.

During her stay in that region, Zina faced binge drinking in the Russian outback, unimaginable poverty, children who died of hunger.

At some point, Zina got information that her mother died. It was a mistake. Time passed before Zina knew the truth.

Another horrible information was that her father was missing. This painful news was compounded by the official state formulation that if a soldier was missing, he falls under suspicion (he could have voluntarily deserted, the thinking went), and his family was deprived of any financial compensation. Only 30 years later, Zina could prove that her father was killed in action.

Before the siege ended, Zina returned to Leningrad. Her disabled mom was recruited to Izhorsk brickyard. Working card gave hope to somehow survive. Zina didn't have the right for such a card because of her young age, so she worked for her mom.

Despite the fact that Zina's father was a militia volunteer, their apartment was given to someone else. After many trips to the courts, Zina had finally been allocated a 7-meter room, where she cared for her paralyzed by that time mom.

Post-war memories include:

After the war, Zina graduated from a high school and enrolled at one of Leningrad universities. It was the time of continuation of Stalin's regime when Doctors' plot happened, the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was persecuted, Russian poets and writers were repressed. Zina couldn't accept that.

Being shocked by different reaction of some of her friends on what was going on in the Soviet Union, she understood the impossibility for her to stay in that country.

In 1989 she came to the US as a visitor and since then has lived in this country. She said she is happy being here.