



A Story of Zonya RUDKO

This is a photograph of Zonya Ignatievna RUDKO from the village of Rechen, Lyuban District. The photo was taken in 2016, shortly before her death. The photo became a “Lekavya Travy” (Medicinal Herbs) music CD cover by the RELIKT group.

The lady knew herbs, advised people on how to use them in healing and used them herself. She was a herbalist without any witchcraft or spellful background – she simply knew what this or that herb was helpful for.

Zonya was born in 1932 in the village of Obchin, and she was acquiring knowledge from Matruna, a local herbalist.

Since olden times, there is a belief in Belarus that before Kupalye (*Ivan Kupala (Ivan's Day, Kupala Night) – a traditional eastern Slavic holiday dedicated to the summer solstice*) herbs get the strongest efficacy, so people (mainly girls and women) gathered herbs in the native village of Zonya and brought them to

Matruna. She dried them and made herbal mixes and then used them for healing the same people – they emerged into the “herbal pulp”.

In Rechen, Zonya married and lived there all her life and raised three children with her husband Michael.

Zonya’s parents died in the wartime and when she was recorded as Zoya in the village council, she insisted on her unusual name, saying “I’ll keep the name my mum and dad have given to me – I’m not Zoya!” And changed the passport.

She loved singing, and folklorists recorded plenty folk songs from her – wedding, calendar, lyric, ballad and chant. And on village holidays, Zonya made tea from different herbs and offered it to guests.