Irina Lidskaya

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My family backgrownd

My name is Irina Yakovlevna Lidskaya. I was born on July 2, 1934 in Kharkov, where my parents lived at the time. When I was born my mother was 36 years old. My father was 33. I was the second child in the family -- when I was born my brother Yuri was 8. Soon afterwards my parents moved to Kiev.

My father, Yakov Benjaminovich (later – Veniaminovich) Lidskiy came from an assimilated family that led a secular life. They lived in Mariupol. His father, Benjamin Lidskiy died from a severe disease in 1918. I can say very little about him, and I only know what he looked like from a picture. My grandfather was born in about 1875–1877 in Mariupol. I don’t know who his parents were, but the family was very well off. My grandfather graduated from the law department of the University and was assistant to a well-known lawyer; he had his own civil right cases. He married for love. He first saw my grandmother, then a 17-year old girl, at a ball, and they got married soon after.

My father used to tell how very different his parents were from each other. Benjamin was an intelligent, reserved and educated man, with a kindly sense of humor. My grandmother was a striking beauty when she was young. I remember a big photograph of her, showing her wearing a fashionable dress of the time and long braids. She remained beautiful as she got older, too. We have a picture of her and her husband and children, taken in 1913, when she was 30. But despite her beauty, she was silly, mean-spirited, capricious and stubborn. My father told me that she always got what she wanted by screaming and shedding tears, even when she was wrong. Her name was Sophia Ivanovna. I don’t know her maiden name or anything about her family. Grandmother Sophia was also born in Mariupol, in 1882. She got some education at home, but she wasn’t religious in her youth.

She and my grandfather did not lead a religious life, or even celebrate the Jewish holidays. They had two children: my father, born in 1901, and his younger brother Lev, born in 1904.
The family lived in an apartment in the center of Mariupol. I don’t know whether this was their own apartment or whether they rented it. I don’t know how many rooms there were, but I know that grandfather had an office in the flat. The boys could come in there every now and then, when their father was not working. Each boy had a room of his own. There was a living room and a dining room where the whole family got together at the table. My father told me that those common

meals were unbearable for him and his brother, as my grandmother thought that the children were not supposed to speak while eating. There was painful silence during meals.

The family was quite well to do. My grandmother took care of the house. Daily servants came in to help her. Russian was spoken in the family, which is why my father didn't know Yiddish. But my grandmother knew Yiddish. After the war she lived together with our family with her second husband, and they used to speak Yiddish to each other.

Both sons in the family finished secondary school. My father started school in 1910. He was smart, and it was easy for him to study. Lev and Yakov both studied music, too. My father played the piano well even in later years. .

My grandfather was only 43 when he died, in 1918. I don't know what he thought about the revolution. As far as I know, he never mentioned it. Perhaps he didn't care any more – he was ill already. After his father's death my father left his parents' house. Lev stayed with their mother, who got remarried about a year later. Lev finished secondary school, but I don't know whether he continued his studies.

My mother's name was Dina Konstantinovna Itskovich. I don't know very much about her parents. I have no information about her father; my mother never answered any of my questions when I was a child, and she changed the subject abruptly when I would ask. My mother's mother, Hana Itskovich, raised her four children by herself from 1906, but I don't know why. The family lived in the town of Artyomovsk in the east of Ukraine.

Grandmother Hana was born in 1879 in Artyomovsk. She died from tuberculosis when she was 40. The family was very poor. There is a photograph of my grandmother Hana taken five years before she died. It shows her wearing a very poor dress with a white collar. My mamma looked very much like her. In winter she used to cover her head with a downy shawl. I remember this shawl. My mother kept it as a memento for many years.

There were three daughters and a son in the family. My mother was the oldest, born in 1898. Then came her sister Beila (Bella), born in 1899. Her brother Daniil (Dania) was born in 1901, and the youngest, Maria (Masha), was born in 1905. My grandmother was a seamstress, and she made bed linen. But her health broke down, and she earned less and less money. They lived in a small wooden house, the house where Grandmother Hana's grandparents had lived. My mother remembered that each year her mother told her how good it would be the following year when they would refurbish their dwelling. The following year would come, and it was all the same. They had two small rooms and a little kitchen, a corner separated from one of the rooms. There was a well in the yard, and the children had to bring water from it and fill up a big barrel in the kitchen. There was a stove that was used for both heating the house and cooking. The older children looked after the younger ones. The couldn't afford to hire a housemaid.

They were very poor and didn't have enough food. Mamma told me that she got her first new dress when she was studying at the Medical Institute. My grandmother wasn't religious, and the children didn't even know the basics of Jewish traditions, religion or rituals. Mamma told me that once her mother said to her in despair (my mother was a 12-year-old girl at the time) "Our Lord turned away from me and then I turned away from him." My mother remembered this phrase for the rest of her life.

They only spoke Russian in the family. My grandmother thought that it would be easier for them to get adjusted, if they knew only the language of the country where they were living. Therefore, neither Mamma or her sisters or brother knew Yiddish.

My mother was eager to study, however. At the time there were charity funds that paid

scholarships to the most talented children from poor families. My mother studied by herself and in 1909, when she was 11 yeas old, she passed all the exams to get into secondary school and got a scholarship. She did very well in her studies, and she also earned some money giving classes. She was paid very little, but it was enough to buy food for the family.

Mamma's sisters and her brother also finished secondary school.

There were pogroms against the Jews in Artyomovsk before the Revolution, my Mamma told me. My mamma's face was the most typically Jewish of all the children. During one terrible pogrom their neighbors, who were orthodox (Christians) hid Mamma and put an icon in the window. People who had icons in their windows sometimes avoided pogroms. But they all knew that if they found out that they were hiding somebody in the house, it put all the tenants in danger. The neighbors covered Mamma's head with a shawl and told her to remember that she was not Dina but Dunia. Mamma managed to survive, but many Jews were killed. It wasn't the only pogrom in Artymovsk, but I remember this story of my mother. There were pogroms in Mariupol, too, but my father's family avoided them.

Mamma told me that in those years life hung on a thread. Besides pogroms, there was the Revolution and the civil war, when the town came under the changing control of one army after another: the white or the red, then the white again and the green. After the revolution there were many gangs. They killed Jews and also others. It was a terrible, cruel and difficult time.

My mother had to work after school. She had to take care of her younger sisters and brother. I know that between 1918 to 1920 she was a doctor's assistant in the town of Bakhmut.

My parents met and fell in love when they were at the Kharkov Medical Institute. My mother enrolled in the Pediatric department of the Institute in 1921 and graduated in 1927. My father had already enrolled in the Institute in 1919, in the General Treatment Department. He graduated in 1925.

I don't know what my mother and father thought about the Revolution. Mamma used to say that her sense of humor was very helpful. She said one couldn't afford to express any critical comments at that time. But then, I remember that they had an ironical attitude towards "revolutionary achievements" in the family.

My parents started living together when they were still students. They didn't have a wedding and lived for a long time in a common law marriage. Much later they needed a Marriage Certificate for some reason, so they went to a registry office to register their marriage. My parents used to recall their life as students with a smile. They lived in a hostel – it was cold and they never had enough food. Their scholarships were so small that they had to earn additional money. But my parents had many friends, and these friendships lasted their whole lives through. After graduation from the Institute my parents lived in Kharkov for some time. They rented a room. There were no conveniences. Life was hard. It was difficult to find a job. My father was hired as a doctor in the medical department at some factory. My mother was a teacher somewhere in the country that was quite distant from Kharkov. My older brother Yuri was born in Kharkov in 1926. He went to school there. I was born 8 years later. A year after my birth my parents moved to Kiev.

To add to the picture of my parents' life in Kharkov, I'll tell something about my mother's brother and sisters. After finishing school, Daniil (Dania) moved in with his sister (my mother) in Kharkov. He studied at the Kharkov Industrial Institute. Upon graduation he worked as an engineer at a big Kharkov plant. In 1940 he became a chief engineer. When the war started, Daniil supervised the evacuation of the plant and its employees. He was supposed to leave the day after

the evacuation was completed. But the Germans were already entering Kharkov, and his neighbors reported to the first of them that there was a "zhyd" in the town. My grandmother told us that he was brutally tormented to death. My mother and father said that Daniil was a very nice, kind and cheerful man. He had no family of his own.

After finishing school Maria, the youngest sister, also came to Kharkov. Maria, like her mother before her, fell ill with tuberculosis when she was a young girl. After their mother's death, Maria got very close to my mother. The doctors promised my mother that they would try to help Maria, but couldn't guarantee anything. In the end, though, after a long time, she was cured completely. It was in Kharkov that Maria met her future husband, my father's friend Abram Davydov. It was love at first sight. She was already ill, and he knew that she had a contagious disease, but he never left her for a moment. At that time Abram studied at the Kharkov Industrial Institute. By the time he graduated, Masha was completely cured. Abram got assigned to work at the heating power plant in Novosibirsk, Siberia. Abram and Masha got married and left for Novosibirsk. They lived together their whole life. In Novosibirsk, Masha entered a technical institute became an engineer like her husband. In 1926 their daughter Faina was born. Abram died in 1976 and Maria in 1980.

My mother's sister Bella (Beila) stayed in Artyomovsk. She met her husband Alexandr Vassiliev there. They got married in 1919 and moved to Alma-Ata. In 1924 their son Vladimir was born. Bella's husband died in a tragic accident, and Bella had to go to work to raise her son. She found a job as a hospital nurse, and then, in the late 1930s she finished medical school. Bella and her son visited Kiev several times. She never retired from her work. She worked until she died in 1976 at the age of 77. Bella lived her whole life in Alma-Ata, and her son is still living there. We write letters to one another.

Growing up

In 1935 our family moved to Kiev. My parents were offered jobs as lecturers at the Kiev Medical Institute. My father got a job in the Military Medicine Department. In addition, my father lectured at the post-graduate training institute. He worked in the Medical Department his whole life. He was a colonel in the military medical service and worked in a hygiene and medical care organization. My mother lectured at the department of pediatrics.

In Kiev we lived in 15/17, Institutskaya street Apt. 4, until the beginning of the war. (Institutskaya street is in the prestigious part of Kiev, called Lipki. This neighborhood takes its name from the name of the Lipa tree - the lime tree. In the 1850s the mayor ordered lime trees planted around the Mariinskiy Palace. After the Revolution the main Soviet governmental bodies were located in the Lipki neighborhood. The street gets its name from the old Institute of Noble Ladies, which was located on this street, at the corner of Kreschatik street. After the Revolution the building of this Institute housed the Political Headquarters (GPU). Now this building is a cultural center and is called the October palace of culture. – Editor's note.) We lived in a separate two-room apartment. It was very comfortable, with central heating, running water, and there was a gas stove in the kitchen. Yura and I had our own room. Mamma thought that her children needed the biggest and brightest room in the house. We had some furniture and a piano -- a luxury at that time. We had a unique library of fiction, medical books and Russian classical literature. The books were used to prepare lectures, and they never got dusted. Of the Jewish authors I remember Sholom Aleichem. He was the favorite author in our family. We also had the Russian translation of Perets

Markish's poems. We had a radio, and Yura had a bicycle.

As often happens in the families of doctors, what parents are afraid of happens to their children. I wasn't a healthy child. I had diathesis (a condition that predisposes the body to various disorders). My mother was a good pediatrician and she knew that if she felt sorry for me I would become a chronic invalid. She was very strict with me. I had to have meals at a fixed time, and I was always hungry, as they gave me very little to eat. Regarding this, I will tell you a funny story from my early childhood. My parents both worked, and they hired a nanny for me. I well remember my Russian nanny Sasha. She was a very nice and kind woman, and she liked children. She was tall and very educated. She knew literature well and held me by my hand during our walks and read Pushkin's poems to me. I adored her. Once she went to the store to buy some bread. She bought a loaf of brown bread and gave it to me to hold while she went back into the store. While she was there I began nibbling on this bread. It was great fun. When my nanny saw it, she was at a loss. She bought another loaf, but she told my parents what had happened. My mother was horrified because this wasn't supposed to be in my diet. But nothing happened to me. I enjoyed it and felt full for the first time in my life. Still, due to my mother's strictness I grew up a normal person. Unfortunately, Nanny Sasha didn't stay log with us. Something happened in her own family that she had to leave us.

At home we never celebrated any holidays except New Year and Victory Day. My parents even forgot their birthdays, as they were at work all day long. Sometimes it was so funny. February 11 was the anniversary of their beginning their life together. One year, they left for work in the morning and Yura and I put flowers everywhere in the flat. They came back home and were surprised – why so many flowers? And then it occurred to them that it was quite an occasion. My parents had an ironical attitude towards the Soviet holidays. And as for religious traditions, I don't remember any rituals or special food, etc. It's a shame that I'm just beginning to learn Jewish holidays and their history.

My parents had many friends, even after the war. They used to come from other towns, Moscow and Kharkov. There were even old school friends. Mikhail Hadzhinov, from Krasnodar, was a member of the Academy of Sciences, a famous biologist and a very interesting person. He was different and he had his principles. There was Mark Abramovich Kapilovich from Kharkov, a famous endocrinologist. He was a great endocrinologist, and whenever our governmental officials had any problems they invited Mark Abramovich and his wife to Kiev. My parents' friends were very much like them: very interesting people. Each of them was a whole world that was so different from all others. They felt at home in our family. Nationalities didn't matter.

Our family was doing all right in those years. However, we rarely traveled in the summer, mainly because my parents were always busy at work.

In 1936, however, fear came into the life of our family and to many others. It was a time of repression that affected many of my parents' colleagues and friends. Black cars would drive up at night and take people away. Nobody knew who would be next. Those were sleepless nights. My father always had his things ready, just in case. But somehow he was spared this disaster.

My brother Yura had a friend at school - Yura Fialkov. Yuriy Arkadievich Fialkov is an outstanding chemist now, a talented scientist. He has a sister – Zhannochka. She is eight years younger. When they were at school, their father was arrested. Their mother, Anna Ruvimovna went to Moscow to prove to them that he was not guilty. She was arrested, too. These two children were left without any care. People at that time were afraid of their own shadow. The teachers at school and neighbors turned away from these two children. Only my parents treated them as before. Yura

Fialkov told me later that my parents were his parents. Fortunately Anna's sister came from somewhere and she took care of the children until their mother was released in 1963. But their father was dead by then.

In 1939 my Dad left the Medical Institute. Dad was famous in Kiev and some people couldn't stand this. He wrote books. But when his first book was published his name was not even mentioned in the list of authors. There were other Ukrainian names. This happened several times. My father stopped writing, but his "co-authors" were outraged. The situation at his work also was growing unbearable. The same thing was happening at the Institute of post-graduate doctors' training. My father left both jobs and went to work at the medical school. Both my mother and my father worked at this school until the end of their lives.

When I was a child, I didn't have any friends. I only made friends after the war. During the pre-war years mass preparation for the war was a common thing. Even small children were preparing for the war and playing war-like games. Everybody knew that the "enemy shall defeated and the victory will be ours!"

My parents knew that Hitler came to power. I personally wasn't concerned, but I remember a widespread feeling of alarm. Rumors about Hitler's attitude towards Jews reached us from Polish refugees. But at that time there was some kind of mass hypnosis in the Soviet Union. Everyone believed that we were the strongest and the best and that Lenin and Stalin were the wisest and most caring leaders. Children who were just learning to speak knew that besides their own grandparents, they had Grandfather Lenin and Grandfather Stalin. This is what they were taught. This hypnosis stayed with us for a long time. For example, I remember going on a trip to Czechoslovakia in 1964. I remember how proud I felt to say that I came from the Soviet Union. Later this proud feeling changed to the feeling of shame, but that was later…

During the war

I remember June 22 (1941), the first day of the war. I remember everyone's concern, panic, tears, yelling, and the noises all around. My father's school was evacuating to Sverdlovsk in August 1941, and our family left with them all. We left our apartment and everything in it. There was a joke in the family that the only thing Mamma took with her was my chamber pot. Our trip was long. The train was overcrowded, with people standing and sitting. At one station Yura had gone out to fetch some water, when the train started all of a sudden. Our parents were looking for him, they thought that he had missed the train. But he had jumped onto another carriage and it took him some time to join us. My parents' hair grew gray before he found us. In Sverdlovsk we got some accommodation at Beryozovskiy Truct. It was something like barracks with no comforts. This was the place where the families of the medical school employees were to live. The family of Pavel Ivanovich Gavros, the director of this school and a wonderful Russian man, also lived there. He was my father's lifelong friend. In Sverdlovsk we heard that my grandmother and grandfather (my father's mother and her second husband – my Dad's stepfather) were also on the way to Sverdlovsk. They didn't want to stay in Moscow with my father's brother Lev; they wanted to join us in Sverdlovsk. In our room in this barrack we had two beds made from planks, one right next to the other. My grandparents slept on one, and we all slept on the other. They returned to Kiev with us and never left us until they died.

The school trained medical assistants then. The course was shorter than usual: either one or

one and a half years. They mostly took boys, as they sent them directly to the war. But there was one girls' battalion. Those girls came from all parts of the huge country. They were full of enthusiasm and eager to defend their motherland. Dina Grebinskaya, a Jewish girl from Leningrad (she still lives today in St. Petersburg) remembers that when she came to the school, the entrance exams were already over. She managed to arrange an interview at the admission commission. Dina was a short girl. They looked at her and said "We can't admit you, because your rifle will be taller than you." Dina responded seriously, "You should be ashamed. You are an important commission, such huge war is going on, and we are sitting here and arguing about one centimeter of my height." She was admitted. Now she has a number of medals.

Yura was 15 and continued his studies. I entered second grade, as I could already read and count. I have only one memory of the school in Sverdlovsk – it is of our singing lessons. We sang one same song every day:

We are the great Red Guard,
We are the wonderful Red Guard,
We have hard hats with a star on them and automatic guns in our hands ,
You, German soldier, beware of the heroes!
We, Red Guard, are the strongest,
We, Red Guard, are the bravest.
We don't drown in the water or burn in the fire,
We shall chase Hitler and the fascists away.

Our teacher in other subjects was Galina Zahezina. She was very young. She loved children and we loved her. We faced the sorrow of the loss for the first time when she fell in love with somebody and went to Rostov-on-the-Don to join him there. We were heartbroken. We even wrote her a letter. In our class there were local children and evacuated children. Our relationships and attitudes were good. My favorite subject at school was Russian literature.

We kids went to school together. The adults worked all day long and we would go to a nearby grove to pick nettles – we made soup from them and were very proud that we were feeding our parents. Once we went to the grove to pick some snowdrops for our parents, but we stayed there until dark. There was an uproar when we returned so late, and our parents punished each of us regardless of our good intentions. There were special food cards at that time. There were long lines to get food with these cards. Our parents didn't have time to stand in those lines so it became the children's job to do so.
There was hardly any food anyway, and the officials suggested to the tenants in our barrack to grow some vegetables on a little plot of land. Everybody tried to grow something, even those who, like my mother, had never done it before. But it worked and we had some additional food.

I remember those winters. It was freezing, the temperature dropped to 40 below zero (Celsius). We didn't have proper clothes, but we were always outside running around. I completed fourth grade in Sverdlovsk.

My father became a Party member. He was convinced to do so, as it was better for his career as a teacher. But he was never an active communist. My mother never became a Party member.

In 1942 my brother decided to go to the front. He was still under draft age, but he kept writing letters to the Moscow military college until he was admitted there as a cadet. My parents worried about him, but they thought he was old enough to make his own decisions.

Abram, the husband of my mother's older sister Maria, had asthma and wasn't called to go to the front. Besides, the power plant where he worked was considered to be a military facility. Lev Lidskiy, my father's brother, stayed in Moscow working at his plant. He had a wife, Masha, and a daughter who was about the same age as I was.

In evacuation we heard about the extermination of the Jews at Babiy Yar. Although it didn't affect our family directly, my parents took it as their a personal tragedy.

In 1944 Kiev was liberated and we returned home. We returned with the medical school that was evacuated to Sverdlovsk. We were excited to be back home. Upon our arrival Dad went to the militia office to confirm his rights to the apartment. But the authorities told him that a General Zheltov liked our apartment and there was no way for us to get it back. He said that if my father was going to fight for it we would have no place to live in Kiev. Daddy explained this problem to my mother and she told him to take things easy and agree to whatever apartment they offered to him. We received an apartment in Arsenalnaya street. It was a two-room apartment. My grandfather and grandmother lived in one room and the four of us in another. My mother said that the older people needed some peace, so they were given a separate room.

After the war

Kiev was ruined. Life was very hard, there was no food or clothes. But the people thought more of public life than their private lives. We were used to the idea that the life of one person was of no importance. This was what a few generations of people were convinced of.

In 1945 Yura returned from Moscow. He had graduated from the military college there, but he didn't want to stay in the army, so he retired. In Kiev he entered the Philological Department at Kiev University. He passed exams for the first year of studies and was admitted into the second year course. My parents continued to work at the medical school and I went to the fifth grade at school #78. The building of the school was half-ruined, and it was soon closed down. Our class was transferred to school #51. I didn't like the school. It was a girls' school. Its director, Anna Ivanova, didn't really like people with Jewish names. She was a rude person – that's what I remember about her; I remember her with repulsion. There were many Jewish pupils in this school, but there were more Ukrainian and Russian children. We had two favorite teachers – Yakov Iosifovich Aizenstadt, who taught mathematics (he was one of the most talented mathematicians in Ukraine), and Raissa Efimovna Leskova, who taught Russian literature. She is 80 now and we still visit her. The other teachers were just boring.

When I was at this school I became a pioneer, but I have no memories of it. I almost had problems with Komsomol There were many things that I didn't quite understand, but I, as I hesitated becoming a member. By the beginning of the tenth grade, all the other students had become Komsomol members. I was called to the director on a daily basis. They kept asking me over and over when I would join. My answer was always the same -- that I was not quite ready for it. We had long discussions, and they told me that it would be a problem for me to enter the Institute if I were not a Komsomol member. In the end I went to the district Komsomol Committee and obtained my Komsomol membership card.

The Soviet holidays were celebrated very pompously back then. Both at school and at the Institute, everybody went to parades with flags and flowers on May 1 and November 7. It mandatory for teachers and children to attend those festivities. I always found it obnoxious and boring.

Upon our return to Kiev we felt immediately how the attitude towards the Jews had changed. The only person in our family with distinct Jewish features was my mother, and wherever she went there she faced anti-Semitic incidents. On public transport and in the street, people called her "Jew" and shouted insults, sometimes saying that Jews were the enemy and had to be destroyed.

I finished school in 1953. I wanted go into a profession that had something to do with literature, but I was told that in Kiev it didn't even make sense to try to enter the University. My parents' acquaintances advised me to go to the Kharkov Library Institute. I passed my entrance exams, but I wasn't admitted. This was the time of widespread anti-Semitism, the time of the "Doctors' Plot" and the struggle with "cosmopolitans." It didn't affect our family, perhaps, because my parents weren't practicing doctors. But I did hear somebody saying in a hospital "Don't go to a Jewish doctor. You know how they murder people".

Stalin died in 1953. I was ill and staying at home at the time, when a classmate called and told me about it. I put on my clothes and went to school. I didn't quite realize why. It wasn't sorrow or anything like it. One mourns when one loses someone close. It was like a mandatory event. The class got together, and one ought to be there. There were no tears shed in the family. Mamma even allowed herself some humorous statements in the family circle. After the Congress (the 1953 Communist Party Congress when Khruschev publicly debunked the cult of Stalin and lifted the veil of secrecy from what was happening in the USSR during Stalin's leadership – Editor's note) a part of all that had happened became known (that is, repression, arrests, forced famine and millions of innocent victims – Editor's note). It took many years to digest all this information and I still remember how horrifying it all was.

In 1954 I entered the Dentistry Department of the Kiev Medical Institute. I didn't have a calling for medicine, but I was eager to live the happy life of student. Besides, it was important to have a higher education. I did well in my studies, but it took a lot of effort. In my group there were two other Jewish girls. They became my friends. During my studies I didn't face any anti-Semitism. Upon graduation in 1959 I received an assignment in Lugansk. Dad wanted to help me find a job in Kiev, but at the time I thought that one had to perform one's duty. I didn't work long in Lugansk, though. It was an awful clinic with a terrible Chief Doctor. Her name was Anna Alexandrovna Polovinchenko. She was filled with malice and anti-Semitism. She didn't even conceal it. But I always tried to do my job well, and it was hard to find fault with me. My father rescued me from Lugansk. He found a job for me in Borispol, and I worked eight years there. I became a real specialist. But it was a terrible, long commute from Kiev. I went there by bus. It was always full of people, baskets and sacks. I always came to work exhausted and tired. But I have very warm memories of this time. We had a very nice shift: two male doctors and I. We were all Jews: Boria Tabachnik, Sasha Gutman and I. There were also two Ukrainian girls. They were both country girls, but they were very well mannered. They treated me very well. And this was during a period that was terrible and fearful. In the yard there was a board of honor, on which photographs of the most distinguished employees were displayed. It was even hard for Ukrainians to earn this honor. Nonetheless, within a few years, my own photograph was posted on this board. I worked very hard.

We were not paid very much. My mother used to say "Ah, your salary? Just enough to go from Pechersk to Podol (from one district to another in Kiev) and to buy a box of matches." But I lived with my parents and this helped a lot.

After eight years, I got a job in Kiev, first at the Kalinin hospital and then at a clinic in Lenin street. I worked there until my retirement.

In the 1950s my father's stepfather died. My grandmother died in 1966 from gangrene.

My older brother Yuri became an English teacher at the Medical Institute after University. A few years later he defended his dissertation and was invited to work at the Academy of Sciences. He taught English to post-graduate students. He got married in 1954. His wife Irina (Ira) is not Jewish. Her family is a mixture of the Russian, Polish and Ukrainian. My parents always liked Ira. She is also an English teacher. In 1961 their son Mikhail was born. He is my beloved nephew.

We were happy and proud to hear about the foundation of Israel. However far we were from identifying ourselves as Jews, we always followed what was going on there. We sympathized with the people moving to Israel, although back then it was considered parricide. As for us, my parents were old already, and they couldn't go. I couldn't leave them: children were supposed to take care of their aging parents. Yura and his family lived in a separate apartment and my parents lived with me.

I am single, although there were men who wanted to marry me. I think now that I compared all men with my father subconsciously and nobody could compete with him. Well, it is too late for regrets. It was only when I started thinking about moving to Israel 20 years ago that my single status became an obstacle . My parents had died by then. They worked until their last days, with a clear mind and lots of energy. My father died in 1978 and my mother died two years later. I was afraid to go to another country all by myself. I wouldn't have had all these doubts if I had a husband beside me.

My brother and his family did move to Israel. Misha, my nephew, wanted to study biology and decided to enter Kiev University. But at 16, when he was getting his passport, he insisted that item 5 say that he was of Jewish nationality. By doing this he lost his opportunity to enter the University. His answers during entrance exams were "excellent", but the teachers only gave him "good" grades. He wasn't admitted. At Yura's advice he agreed to go to the Agricultural Academy to get a degree. By that time Misha had already decided he would move to Israel, but Yura convinced him that it was better to go there with a diploma. Misha studied in the Academy for three years. Then he gave up his studies and submitted his documents for departure to Israel. His parents followed him. This was in 1991. They live in Tel-Aviv. They have a good life. My brother and his wife found jobs at the Tel-Aviv University, Ira as an English teacher and Yura in scientific work. They are retired now, but the University employs Ira several months a year. Misha has become a journalist and works for Russian language publications. He also became a professional photographer and published a photographic book called "Israel 2000: Contradictions & Metaphors." He immediately got offers to compile catalogs of museums in Israel and Europe. He had to take photographs of art works and write about artists. He got married in Israel. His wife is from St. Petersburg. They love each other and, I hope, they will be happy.

In 1994 I visited my brother in Israel. I found this country amazing. There is history in every stone there. I traveled a lot around the country. I was overwhelmed with impressions. I am proud of the people who could construct beautiful towns in the desert, grow gardens and preserve ancient monuments. This was unforgettable. It is my dream to go to Israel again.

In the past 10 years much has changed in Ukraine. I knew there were changes when I saw a huge portrait of Sholom Aleichem in Proreznaya street. It was during our first President Kravchuk's administration. There was a jubilee for Sholom Aleichem. This would have been impossible in previous years. I think anti-Semitism is in the past already. There are splashes of it, but they mostly come from older people, not the young ones.

There is Jewish life in Kiev. The Jewish community arranges concerts, plays and lectures. Hesed helps us a lot to survive physically. It is moving and sad to realize that Israel is taking care of us,

although we haven’t worked a day for this country or given it anything. And the country where we lived our whole life and to which we gave all our energy couldn’t care less about us. At the Hesed I always read Jewish newspapers and magazines. I always look forward to getting the next issues. I’m glad I’ve lived until this time. I’m sorry my parents didn’t.