

Frida Palanker

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Chernovtsy

Ukraine

Ella Levitskaya

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I am Frida Palanker, nee Veprinskaya. I was born in Kiev on 24 September 1921.

My father Nusim (Naum) Veprinsky was born in Korostyshev, Zhytomir region, in 1895. My mother Polina Veprinskaya, nee Shapiro, was born in Odessa in 1899.

My grandfather on my father's side Meyer Veprinsky was born in Korostyshev in 1859. In 1889 he married my grandmother Doba, nee Sheyer, born in 1862. I have no information about my grandparents' family or where my grandmother came from. My grandfather was the youngest son in his family. He was living in his parents' house. He was a tinsmith and my grandmother was a housewife. They had four children that survived. Three other children died in their infancy. I don't know their names. I knew two brothers and the sister of my father. The only daughter in my father's family was Rahil, born in 1892, and she was the oldest child. My father Nusim was the second child, born in 1895. Yakov, Yankel, born in 1900, was the third child. Their youngest son Simon was born in 1904.

Their family wasn't wealthy. The boys studied in cheder and Rahil received education at home. They only spoke Yiddish in the family.

Their family was religious. They observed Jewish traditions. My grandparents went to the synagogue on Saturday, celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays. My grandmother followed kashruth. She always wore a shawl when going out.

Korostyshev was basically a Jewish town. Jews constituted the major part of the population. Basically, inhabitants of Korostyshev were handicraftsmen and farmers. All tailors and shoemakers in Korostyshev were Jews. Jews also kept small stores selling food products, clothing and shoes, etc.

There were also Ukrainians in Korostyshev. There were no national conflicts. Ukrainians and Jews got along well. Jews and Ukrainians communicated in Yiddish and Ukrainian. Almost all Ukrainians in Korostyshev knew Yiddish. There was a synagogue and a church in Korostyshev.

From 1914 and until the end of the civil war gangs used to attack Korostyshev. There were no big pogroms, but the gangs were beating people and they even burnt one house once, although they allowed the tenants to leave it before they set it on fire. Probably the reason was that those were smaller gangs and their main goal was to get food.

My parents used to take my sisters and me to Korostyshev for summer vacations. I remember my grandmother and grandfather - both of them were short, thin, active and very nice. They were hard working and kind people. They wore plain clothes - Korostyshev was a small town and there was no

reason to wear fancy clothes. My grandfather used to wear dark trousers with a belt, a light shirt and a sleeveless jacket and a kippah to cover his head. He had a small beard and a moustache. My grandmother used to wear a long dark skirt and a light cotton polka dotted or flowered shirt and a light shawl on her head. They loved to have their grandchildren visiting them. They were so very kind and hospitable. My grandmother always cooked something delicious for us. She cooked Jewish dishes: sweet and sour stewed meat, chicken broth, pancakes that she called "latkes" - this was everyday food. I can't say what kind of dishes she cooked for Pesach, as we only visited Korostyshev in summer.

My grandmother and grandfather spoke Russian and Yiddish to us. They knew Russian well, but it was easier for them to communicate in Yiddish. However, they spoke both Russian and Yiddish to us - they wanted us to know our mother tongue Yiddish and made us speak it at home, too.

I remember their house. They lived in the very center of Korostyshev. They had a big house with few rooms. There was a cellar in the house where they had food storage. There was a kitchen garden and an orchard near the house. My grandmother kept a cow and chicken. I remember the hayloft over the shed and we loved to get into the smelling nicely hay. There was a well in the street close to the house from where they used to take water for the house.

They had a stove where my grandmother cooked food and made baked milk in ceramic pots. This milk had a very delicious goldish skin. There were other stoves to heat the house. In summer my grandmother used to purchase wood to last for the winter. They kept this wood in a shed in the yard.

My grandfather and grandmother didn't do any work on Saturday. An Ukrainian woman, their neighbor, came to milk the cow and feed the chicken. On Friday morning my grandmother cooked food for Saturday. On Friday night my grandmother lit candles and prayed. I loved to watch her at such moments. They didn't force us to pray and I don't remember any traditional songs or prayers in Yiddish, although I heard lots of them when I was a child.

My grandmother took me with her to do shopping at the market. We bought kosher products from Jewish vendors at the market. If it was chicken or a goose, we used to take it to the shoihet. He had his shop at the market to comply with kosher food requirements. The farmers were selling their products: eggs, sour cream, cottage cheese and vegetables. Many of them had their customers and they brought food to their homes.

The children of my grandparents' sons Yasha and Simon also came to visit them. Zlata, the wife of Uncle Yasha, brought her daughter Raya and son Moisey. Simon lived in Zhytomir and his two sons also visited my grandparents. We spent time together playing, going swimming in the Teterev river and to the forest. We played "hide and seek", "diabolo" and skipping-rope. We used to hang hummocks in the wood and sleep in them in the afternoon heat. Korostyshev was in 100 km from Kiev and many people from Kiev used it as a country recreation spot to spend their summer vacation. Many families built small country houses in their yards to let them to the holiday-makers. It was another source of income for the locals.

Aunt Rahil and her husband and children lived in my grandparents' house in Korostyshev. I can hardly remember her husband and don't know what he was doing for a living. Rahil was a

housewife. She was a very hospitable and nice and kind woman. She had many children, but I only remember two of them: her daughter Doba and her older son Lyova. Lyova wanted to leave a small town for the bigger world and left for the far East when he was 14 or 15. We didn't hear from him for a long while. When the war began he came to Korostyshev. There were only distant relatives left in town by then. They let us know that Lyova was there and that he had a family in the Far East. Aunt Rahil, her husband and children were killed by Germans in 1941 along with all Jews in Korostyshev. My grandfather died in 1939 and my grandmother died in February 1941.

My mother Polina Veprinskaya was born in Odessa. Her father Haim Shapiro died in 1913. I have no information about him. After he died my grandmother Sura Shapiro and her two children moved to Kiev. The only information about my grandmother that I have is that she was born in 1861.

My mother had an older brother Ion, born in 1890. They called him Mutsele, the little one, in the family, because he was very short. In Kiev Ion became a jeweler apprentice and became a skilled jeweler. He had a store in Podol during NEP. The authorities expropriated this store around 1925. He worked at the state jeweler store for some time. He was called several times to the NKVD office. They demanded that he gave away all his gold. This made Ion lose his love to the jeweler's art. He became an apprentice of the tuner of musical instruments and worked as an engineer at the factory of musical instruments. Ion was married. His wife's name was Revekka. They were very much in love with one another. From what I know they were not away from one another for one single day. They had four children. Their older son Haim fell ill with flu and died when he was 20. Revekka suffered so much from this loss. They had two sons and a daughter left. His daughter Maria was very beautiful and talented. She lived a long and happy life. Maria finished Acting Department at the Kiev Theatrical Institute. Before the war she was an actress of the Russian Drama Theater in Kiev. After the war Maria was a producer at the amateur theater. Later she graduated from the Department of Journalism at Kiev University and worked as a journalist for a newspaper. She was married to Ostromogilsky, a Jew. He was Hero of the Soviet Union. They had a son Efim. Maria died in 1991 when she was 76 and was buried at the Jewish part of Lukianovskoye cemetery in Kiev near her parents. Grigory (Gersh), the son of Maria and Georgiy, worked at the radio engineering plant in Barnaul during evacuation and stayed there after the war. In due time Grigory became director of this plant. He died in Barnaul in the 1970s. His wife and son live in Kiev. The younger son Iona Israil lived in Kiev and worked at the radio station. His wife Mara died in the 1970s and Israil and his two sons emigrated to America. Uncle Ion died in 1967 and Revekka died one year later.

I knew my grandmother Sura and loved her much. She lived alone in a small room on the first floor in an old building in Podol. She earned her living by baking bread and rolls and selling them. I still remember her delicious little rolls with no stuffing. My grandmother had her big stove in the same room where she lived, she made rolls at home and always had lots of customers in the house. The room was very clean. Her bakeries were very popular. All of her neighbors were her customers. They knew that my grandmother's bakeries were kosher. She often received orders to bake rolls and pies for family celebrations. When I grew up I often went to visit my grandmother by myself. I took the funicular to get to Podol and from there I walked to her house. My grandmother was very religious. There was a synagogue not far from her house and my grandmother went there almost every day. She had a shelf with a curtain in her room where she kept her Easter dishes. She covered her head with a shawl before going out. I don't remember her praying at home. On Friday

she went to the synagogue after lighting candles and we tried to leave her alone at such moments. Everyone that knew my grandmother loved her. She was very intelligent, kind and honest. She always tried to help and support people before they had to ask her. She also taught me to offer help if somebody needed it, and they would always accept it. My grandmother's influence in my upbringing was very significant. She worked until the last days of her life, even when she was ill. My grandmother Sura died in 1940.

In 1915 my father came to Kiev to learn a profession. He became a tailor's apprentice and then developed into a real good tailor for women's gowns. He worked as a cutter at the garment factory before the war. My father was a born tailor. Then my father's brother Yasha came to Kiev and my father taught him the profession of a tailor. Uncle Yasha lived nearby and often visited us. He was a very religious man.

My parents got married in 1917. I don't know how they met. My mother told me once that it was love from the first sight. Both of them came from poor families and their wedding party was very modest. But it was still a real Jewish wedding with the huppah and all wedding rituals. My parents got an apartment in Bolshaya Podvalnaya street in the center of Kiev. Our apartment was in the wing of a big 4-storied brick building. There were two rooms, a kitchen, a toilet and a hallway in this apartment. There was no bathroom and we washed ourselves in the kitchen. There was no running water in the house. We had a pump in the yard and brought water from there in buckets.

In 1919 my parent had their first baby. I don't remember his name. He lived less than a year and died in 1919. I was born in 1921. My sister Eva was born in 1924. Genia was born in 1927 and my brother Mark was born in 1934.

My father was a tailor and my mother was a housewife. She also learned to sew before she got married. She was an apprentice of a tailor and her specialty was making skirts. She didn't work after she got married, because it was traditional for a Jewish woman to be a housewife. Although the family wasn't wealthy my mother only made skirts for herself and her daughters.

My sisters and I lived in one room and my parents lived in another. I remember a yellow leather sofa in our room – it was in fashion at that time. There was a shelf on the high back of this sofa and a mirror above. There were small leather pillows on both sides of the sofa. I slept on it. There was a piano beside my sofa. There was a wider sofa by the opposite wall where my sisters slept. We also had a wardrobe and a bookcase and a desk in our room.

There was a nickel-plated bed and big mirror above it in my parents' room. There was also a bookcase with many books in Yiddish and Russian. There was a big dinner table and a cupboard in the kitchen. My mother liked beautiful dishes. She had a set of dishes of blue color and beautiful silver utilities – Ion's wedding present. The rooms were heated by the stove tiled with white and pink tiles.

His brother Yasha often came to pick my father up to go to the synagogue together. During WWI Uncle Yasha was at the front. He froze his feet and had his toes amputated on both feet. He had a problem walking, but he still went to the synagogue two or three times a week. Uncle Yasha and his family were in Gorky throughout the WWII. Uncle Yasha's son perished at the front and the rest of his family returned to Kiev after the war. Uncle Yasha died in 1990.

At Sabbath my mother lit candles and cooked delicious dinner. My father worked on Saturday, as Saturday was a workday. They celebrated Jewish holidays. I remember Papa putting Hanukkeh geld (small change) under his children's pillows. At Pesach my parents used to buy matsa at the synagogue. My mother crushed it in the mortar and then sifted the flour to make sponge cakes. Mama cooked stuffed fish and made chicken neck with liver and fried flour and boiled chicken. We didn't have bread in the house at Pesach. My mother had Pesach dishes that were used only on this holiday. It was set of dishes for dinner, casseroles and frying pans. My uncle Yasha and his wife and sometimes Ion and his family came to join us for the celebration Uncle Yasha, the oldest man in the family, read a prayer. At Yom-Kipur my father and mother fasted, but my mother made food for us, children, on these days.

There was a Ukrainian school across the street from our school. I went to school when I was 8. My sisters also went to this school later. Ukrainian was a problem for me at the beginning - I didn't know it, but I was making a good progress in it. About half of the children in my class were Jews. But there was no national issue at that time. There were Jews among teachers as well.

I became a young Octobrist and then a pioneer at school. Admittance to the pioneers was a festive ceremony held at the conference-hall at school. After they tied our neck ties the pioneer leader said "Be ready!" and we replied in chorus "Always ready!" (to struggle for the cause of the CPSU - Communist party of the Soviet Union). My responsibility as a pioneer was to help my classmate with his Russian grammar. He came to my home after classes and wrote dictations. I remember how proud I was when he received his first good mark for the dictation at school.

I liked history and literature, but I wasn't quite fond of mathematics. When I was in the 2nd form my parents sent me to study at the music school to learn to play the violin. I had classes there twice a week. A piano was a second instrument that I was learning to play.

1932 and 1933 was the period of horrific famine in Ukraine. I shall never forget this terrible time. There were swollen and half-dressed people in the streets: children, adults and old people. There were dead bodies on the pavements. They were the people coming to Kiev from the surrounding villages. This famine struck the villages basically. People also starved in towns, but to a less extent. We survived due to our father. He made clothes and was paid in food products. My father was the only one working in the family, but he provided for all of us.

When I was to go to the 6th form a 10-year music school was established at the Conservatory. My teacher of music suggested that I took exams to enter this school. After finishing this school children were admitted to the Conservatory without exams. I passed exams and was admitted to the 6th form. This school was in Kreschatik street near the Conservatory. We studied general and special music subjects: musical literature, solfeggio and harmony. My violin teacher was Professor of Conservatory Bertie. There were many Jewish children in this school. I remember one girl from the composer class for specifically gifted children. Her name was Didi Rzhavskaya. She was very talented and composed music when she was a child. Of my classmates I remember Yunia Budovsky - he became a concertmaster at the Opera Theater. I also remember Abrasha Shtern. I don't know whether they are still alive. They were great musicians and laureates of musical contests. We admired them.

There were 10–15 children in one class. I can't say that we were all friends, but there were no demonstrations of anti-Semitism.

We celebrated all Soviet holidays. Schoolchildren and teachers went to the parades and carried flags and slogans. There were concerts at school after the parades. At home we celebrated Jewish and Soviet holidays, because such was a tradition. We also celebrated New Year and birthdays of all family members at home.

I spent my summer vacations with my grandparents in Korostyshev. We went swimming and playing with other children. We enjoyed ourselves. My grandfather and grandmother were religious and went to the synagogue, but we, children, were not involved in any of these things. My grandmother cooked deliciously and we didn't care a bit about whether it was kosher or it wasn't. Besides, there are no holidays in summer.

We had performances to demonstrate our skills at school and often attended students' performances at the Conservatory. I tried to attend all interesting concerts at the Philharmonic. We could only afford the cheapest tickets.

Studying at the musical school took almost all of my time. I didn't follow any political events or occurrences of that time. Of course, I knew that Hitler came to power in Germany and about the war in Poland, but I didn't care.

Repression of 1936 didn't touch our family or the families of my acquaintances and so, I didn't know much about them.

In 1939 my friends and I formed a small orchestra. There were only girls there – the brass and the string group. There was also a singer – she was a student of the vocal class. We rehearsed at school. Our school teacher Magaziner, a Jew, was director of the orchestra. In about half a year we entered into the agreement with the director of the "Chance" cinema on the corner of Kreschatik and Proreznaya about playing in this movie theater. Movie performances began at 4 and we came after classes and played at the lobby. We had costumes to wear on the stage. They were made from brown cashmere with a white inset on the chest and a bow tie. We played popular pop songs and received money for our work. I was very happy to give this money to my mother. Mira Shenderovich, the violinist in our orchestra, was my friend. She lived in Podol, not far from where my grandmother Sura lived. We met with Mira after the war also. Later she went to Kishinev, got married and emigrated to Israel with her family. Her daughter lives in Austria now. She is laureate of international contests, violinist and great musician. Mira died in Israel. We were a team of people in the orchestra. We were united by what we were doing and our enthusiasm. Even after we entered the Conservatory we continued to play in the orchestra.

In 1940 after finishing school I was auditioned for my skills in playing the violin and was admitted to Kiev State Conservatory. Almost all of my classmates entered the Conservatory, too. My teacher of the violin mastership was the same Professor Bertie that had been my teacher at school before. This was an interesting time. We had students' performances and all students were to attend them. It was necessary to attend these performances to share the experience and to learn from the others. I had many friends. I began to meet with Fima Barsky, my classmate's older brother. Fima was two years older than I. He was a very nice and smart boy. He came from the Jewish

family of teachers. I liked him a lot. We were thinking of getting married in a year or two, but the war broke our plans. Fima was mobilized during the first days of the war and perished soon afterward.

I remember the first day of the war, 22 June 1941. We heard about the beginning of the war from the official speech of Molotov on the radio. But even before his speech there were rumors about bombing of Sviatoshyno and Darnitsa, the outskirts of Kiev. Everything was such a mess and people were crying or panicking. We were confused and didn't know what to do. My father wasn't recruited to the army. At the beginning of the war only young men and professional military were summoned to the front and my father was 46 by the beginning of the war. He was left in reserve as well as other men between 40 and 50 years old. The reservists didn't have a right to leave Kiev. They were supposed to wait for either recruitment to the front or an order summoning them to the labor front. So my father stayed and my mother, my sisters, my brother and I evacuated on 25 July 1941. It wasn't an organized process. There was an announcement that those that wanted to evacuate were to come to the reserve railroad spur at Pechersk. We took one suitcase with us and I had my violin with me. Our father took us to the railway station. He was afraid to go with us - he thought he might have been executed as a deserter. We said our good-bye to him and boarded the platform railcars. The trip was very long and people were starving to death or dying from diseases. During bombings we were getting off the train to run away. During the stops we had to get some food. We arrived in Kokand, Middle Asia. From there we were sent to a collective farm. We were accommodated in a little hut made of hay mixed with sheep manure. There were ground floors in it. We made plank beds to sleep on them. We had a steel sheet on the floor where we made fire to cook and a tripod to hang the pot over the fire. We put wood and dry branches of saxaul on the metal sheet to start the fire. Acrid smoke was filling the hut. All of us, except brother Mark that was 8 at that time, worked at the collective farm. We got miserable payment for our work that was too little to get sufficient food. We sometimes bought some food or changed our clothes for food at the market, only we hardly had anything to take to the market. Once I met our neighbor from Kiev. She told me that I could work at the collective farm where she worked and that they were paying with flour and cereals for work. It was located in 30 km from the village where we lived. I went there and got a job. They gave flour, cereals and bread as payment for work. Once a week I went back home to bring them food. Mama was very weak, because she left all food that we had to her children. In spring 1942 my little brother starved to death and a month after him my mother died. My mother and my brother were buried in common graves. I didn't have money to bury them decently. We didn't hear from our father. We had no information about him until 1945, and we understood that he wasn't among the living any longer, because if he had been alive, he would have let us know. When I was in the evacuation I was continuously trying to find out any information about my father, sending requests to the military recruitment office. Their response to me was that his name was not on the lists of the deceased. That was all information I had about him. My sisters and other orphaned children were sent to a factory school in Sverdlovsk, Ural. The sisters were provided for by the state. Of course, it wasn't quite sufficient, but they were not starving to death, on the other hand, and had some clothes to wear. Both of them learned to work on lathe units and worked at the plant manufacturing shells for the front.

In some time I was offered a job in the orchestra of Uzbek theater in Kokand. The Uzbek music is different and I had problems at the beginning. Thus, we received food cards at the theater and it

meant 400 grams of bread a day. I knew that Kiev Jewish Musical Theater was evacuated to Kokand. Before the war this theater was located in Kreschatik street. I can't remember the details, but I met someone that worked at this theater, and they suggested that I went to work in the orchestra of this theater. I was auditioned by the conductor of the orchestra and was admitted. It is written in my employment record book that I was "employed by the theater as a musician at the orchestra. 10 August 1944 ».

I also got accommodation. I had little experience to play their complicated music. A famous Jewish composer Shteinberg composed music for their performances. I was rehearsing and studying a lot. Performances in the theater were in Yiddish. They only had one or two performances in Russian. If the performance was in Yiddish they explained in Russian what it was about before the beginning for those that didn't understand the language. There was different public, and they always cheered in appreciation of acting. There were problems related to approval of the repertoire. Everything had to be censored: God forbid if there was any deviation from the official ideology! There was strict selection of plays – they had to comply with ideological requirements of the time. However, they managed to stage classics of the Jewish literature, like Sholem Alehem's "Wandering stars". All actors were from Kiev. I must tell you that I've never been in such friendly atmosphere, as was in the Jewish Theater. Of course, we felt togetherness because all of us had to live through the war and we faced the same difficulties and were survivors, but there was more to it than that...

In the end of 1944 our theater came on a long tour to Fergana. We were told there that the theater was to move temporarily to Chernovtsy until the building of the theater in Kiev was completed. We went to Chernovtsy by train. The train stopped for a while in Kiev. All of us were from Kiev and we went to take a look at our home. I found our house in place, although the neighboring houses were destroyed.

After I returned to Kiev in 1945 my neighbors told me what happened to my father. Some time before the war a German man moved into our house. He was a very polite and decent person. He changed when Germans entered Kiev. He walked as if he were too important to notice anybody or anything around. He gave away all Jews, including my father. My neighbors were afraid to hide my father. It was dangerous for them and their children. On 29 September a few policemen came for my father. They took him to the Babiy Yar and shot him. This German man left Kiev with the German army.

One evening I went to Kiev Theater of Musical Comedy. People came there to honor victims of the Babiy Yar. It was conducted by Mihoels that came from Moscow. I remember him making his speech holding a big crystal vase filled with ashes from the Babiy Yar. Then a girl that escaped from the Babiy Yar told her story. She was a young girl, no more than 20 years old, but her hair was as white as snow. Her classmate met her in the street and told Germans that she was a Jew. She was captured and taken to the Babiy Yar. Columns of Jews were going to the Babiy Yar along Artyoma and Melnikova streets. People were shot in groups. They had to undress and their bodies were thrown into the ravine. The next group of people waiting for their turn to be shot buried dead or wounded people. The land was stirring up and breathing... This girl was wounded. She got out of the ravine at night came home. Her neighbors were hiding her for the rest of the war. I remember her story as if she told it yesterday...

Back to my story, we arrived in Chernovtsy in 1945. There were many vacant buildings there. This town joined the USSR in 1940. It belonged to Rumania before. After the war the local population was moving to Rumania and those that returned from evacuation could move into any apartment. I wanted to live near the theater and I moved into the apartment sharing it with a neighbor. Each of us had two rooms, and we had a common kitchen, bathroom and a toilet. There was no anti-Semitism in Chernovtsy, and the attitude towards Jews was very loyal.

Our theater was called “Jewish Musical Theater named after Sholem Alehem». This was a very good theater with very good actors. One of production directors, Misha Loev lives in New York now. He wrote and published a book about Kiev Jewish Theater. Its title is “The last match”. It is a very detailed story of Kiev Jewish Theater: performances, actors and the true history.

In 1945 my sisters Eva and Genia came to Chernovtsy. Genia entered a pedagogical college and Eva went to the medical college. My sisters and I were happy to be together.

In 1946 I got married. I met my future husband at the hairdresser’s where I went to have my hair cut. He was a hairdresser. His name was David Palanker. He came from Rumania. He was born to a Jewish religious family in Bucharest in 1910. His parents were religious people, but David left his family when he was very young. He was an atheist, quite like me, but that’s about all information about him that I have. In his youth he finished a music school and played the clarinet in the orchestra. Later he moved to Beltsy, a Moldavian town. Moldavia belonged to Rumania then. In 1940 Moldavia joined the USSR and he became a Soviet citizen. David was mobilized to the front at the beginning of the war. He was wounded, but returned to the front afterward. After the war David came to Chernovtsy. It turned out that we had a common acquaintance – Dats, a violinist from the theater. Dats also lived in Bucharest and the two of them were musicians in the same orchestra. David was much older than I. We were seeing each other for a while. To be frank, I wasn’t in love with him. I couldn’t forget Fima. But then I thought to myself that nobody wanted me, a lonely and poor woman. I had only one dress that I used to wear to the theater. I didn’t even have a coat. I thought it would be easier if there were two of us. We didn’t have a wedding party. We had a civil ceremony. We were far from wealthy. My salary in the theater was low. My husband had a plan for the number of visitors per day. The number of people in this plan was higher than actual number of visitors, but it was his duty to comply with the requirements of the plan. So, he added his own money to the cash receipts of the hairdresser’s pretending that it was his clients’ payments.

My sister Eva met her future husband Mitia Goltsman in the same hairdresser’s. He was a very strong, handsome, tall and a very nice Jewish man. They fell in love with one another. I tried to keep my sister from getting married. I knew what it was like to be poor and wanted a better life for her. But Eva said that they loved each other and nothing else mattered. They had a civil ceremony. Eva finished medical college and began to work as a nurse at the district hospital. Mitia was a hairdresser. They had 3 daughters: Rosa, Polina and Inna. The oldest Rosa graduated from Pedagogical University in Voronezh. In the early 1970s my sister Eva and her family moved to Israel. Her husband worked as a hairdresser there and Rosa worked as a teacher at school. Their middle daughter Polina finished medical college in Israel and works as senior medical nurse in the hospital in Rehavot. The youngest – Inna – got married in Israel, but her husband wanted to live in the USA and they emigrated there. Eva and her husband live in El-Kabot. She couldn’t get adjusted to the climate and started having heart problems. She had a surgery and a heart stimulator

implanted. Two years ago she had her stimulator replaced. Her husband had a stroke and is not feeling well. Eva calls me sometimes. Unfortunately, I can't afford to call her.

My younger sister Genia finished the pedagogical college. She met Israil Lubovsky, a Jewish man, at this college. When they told us they wanted to get married my husband and I decided to arrange a real Jewish wedding for them. This was in 1954 and it was not safe to have it at the synagogue or other public place due to the punishment that might follow (get fired from work as a minimum or get arrested and imprisoned for few years as a maximum for the propaganda of religious rituals). We made a huppah on the balcony and the Chernovtsy rabbi conducted the Jewish traditional wedding ceremony. Of course, our neighbors or just passers-by saw us, but they didn't report on us to the authorities. They knew that it was a big holiday for us. After finishing the college Genia and her husband went to Beltsy in Moldavia. Genia had a son. When he grew up a little she went to work at school and study at the Kishinev University of commerce. She graduated from it receiving the diploma of an economist. Her son was a very talented boy. He finished musical school in Beltsy and then - Conservatory in Kishinev. Genia's son emigrated to Israel in the 1970s and Genia and her husband joined him there shortly afterward. Genia's son lives in Jerusalem now. He has three children. Genia lives in Ashkelon. Her husband died few years ago. Genia got blind recently and the surgery was no success. But she doesn't want to return to Ukraine.

When Eva arrived in Israel she put down our father's name in the Book of memory at the Yad-Vashem museum. When I was visiting Israel at the invitation of my sisters I went to this museum and saw and turned few pages of this huge and heavy book. We put the necessary information about our father into this book and also wrote that he perished in the Babiy Yar. It is the only monument honoring the memory of our father.

I went on tours in Israel, admiring what I saw. I had the feeling of the Jewish history that was all around me. And, on the other hand, it is a very modern and nice country.

My husband and I haven't been religious people. We didn't go to the synagogue, pray or follow the kashruth. However, we did celebrate Jewish holidays. We also celebrated Soviet holidays. We were young and enjoyed having guests for a celebration. Genia and her husband often arrived from Moldavia to be with us at Pesach and the 1st of May. We spoke Russian with them. Later, when our daughter was born, we switched to Yiddish when we didn't want her to understand what we discussed.

In 1948 struggle against cosmopolitanism began. The authorities began to destroy the Jewish culture and language. They closed the synagogue and the only Jewish school in Chernovtsy. They were persecuting Jewish writers and musicians. Once we came to the theater and were read the direction to close it. The building of the theater was to be given to house Medical University. Almost all employees were fired. They couldn't fire me. I was pregnant and if they did, it would have been violation of the law. Therefore I formally remained an employee of this theater throughout the period of its elimination. The last day of existence of the theater is specified in my employment record book: «Resigned due to the elimination of the theater. 1950, 28 February». Later many actors of the theater left for Israel. In 1948 we heard about the "accident" that happened to Mihoels. He "got in a car accident" and died. But nobody believed it was an accident.

Our daughter Lilia was born on 11 September 1949. Her Jewish name was Leya. After the theater was closed I couldn't find a job for some time. I decided to complete my music education. After my daughter was born I entered the Music College in Chernovtsy and got the diploma of violin player. In 1957 I became a violinist at Chernovtsy Ukrainian Drama Theater. I worked there for 41 years. I retired in 1998 working 20 more years after I reached the retirement age.

«Doctors' case» that began in 1953 kind of legalized the state anti-Semitism. Jews were fired. People refused to visit Jewish doctors. Nobody in our family suffered from it. Of course, many people understood that this whole process was slanderous.

Stalin's death wasn't a tragedy for me considering elimination of the Jewish theater and the "doctors' case". I did realize that he should have been aware of what was happening around. I didn't care that he died.

My husband died in 1978. My sisters were calling me to Israel, but I never wanted to go there. I was afraid of the uncertainty that might be waiting for me there. Young trees may grow well in the new soil, but the old ones may die. I think, I'm too old for moving. Besides, I shall be alone there. People don't make new friends at this age.

I often went on tours with the theater. We went to towns, villages, even at farmyards or at the plants during their lunchtime. My daughter went to kindergarten. Once somebody hit her on the head, and the trauma resulted in injury of the speech center in her brain. My daughter stopped speaking and was behind in her development. She could only study at a special school. Her speech habits restored in the course of years, but the consequences of the trauma have their impact even now. My daughter finished a Russian secondary school. In 1973 she married a young Jewish man. He was a relative of my acquaintances in Chernovtsy. He lived in Kiev with his parents and my daughter moved to Kiev, too. She changed her last name to her husband's name - Leht. Her husband was a laborer at the motor-cycle factory in Kiev. In 1974 their daughter was born. She died from pneumonia in her infancy. In 1975 they had a son Vladimir. After the disaster at the Chernobyl power plant in 1986 they moved to Israel with her husband's parents. My daughter divorced her husband. Her son stayed with my daughter's mother-in-law. Now my grandson, his father and his grandmother live in Los-Angeles. My grandson finished college in the USA and is going to go to the University. My daughter lives in Israel. She doesn't work and receives a pension.

At the end of the 1980s the Yiddish language club was opened at the House of Culture. It was headed by a children's doctor. He knew the language well. I could speak Yiddish, but I couldn't read or write. I studied in this club for two years.

In the recent ten years Jewish life in Chernovtsy has become very active. There are Jewish communities and we can read Jewish magazines and newspapers. Chesed and Jewish charity committee support us. They give us food and clothes and we have interesting activities there. We celebrate Jewish holidays and Sabbath in the community. We can attend interesting lectures and concerts. One a week I attend literature club, conducted by lecturer of Chernovtsy University. On Monday I attend our communication club. Quite a few people attend it. We have discussions and enjoy spending time together.

I do some work as well. We have a program on Chernovtsy radio “Das yiddishe Wort”. I am an announcer in this program. It is of great use that I can read and write in Yiddish. We look for interesting materials about life stories of Jews. We receive letters from our listeners. It supports me to realize that people need me and wait to hear “Good afternoon, my dears. We begin our program”.