

## Meer Kuyavskis And His Family



This is our family. From left to right- my middle son Alyukas, my wife Stephania, my younger son Evgeniy, and I. My elder was in the army at that time. The picture was made in 1960s in Kaunas.

In 1947 I started working in the atelier as a tailor. I was pretty good money there. My skills got better and better and soon I became a good cutter of men's and ladies' garment. I had my own clients and had a rather comfortable living. I rented an apartment from one Jewish lady. It was not far from my work. In couple of years I went to work to the factory, where I was promoted to the foreman.

At times, I went to the cinema, dancing, to the recreation center for the machinist. At the dancing party I met Stephania Vakayte, a young Lithuanian lady. I liked her instantly. Stepha had a small daughter Aldona, born in 1946. I took her as my own child. In 1949 Stepha and I had our marriage registered.

In 1950 our son was born. We named him Shlema after my father. I made pretty good money like other cutters. I could make my cuts. I do not want to share what I did. All I can say that it was impossible to live on salary only, so like other people working at the factory I saved a little bit on the fabric and then sold it externally.

My life was good. In 1956 my second son was born. Stepha asked to give him Lithuanian name Alyukas as it was her father's name. In 1960 my third son Evgeniy was born. Our family was very friendly. Elder daughter Aldona had also treated me like father and I loved her as my own daughter. I work hard at the factory and also took private orders at home. I provided a good living for my family. Stepha and I never parted with the exception of the three months in 1957, when I had to go through additional training in the army. In early 1950s the factory granted us a small one-room apartment and in late 1960s I had the apartment built in cooperative building and paid my own money for it. I had a car. My family and I went to Palanga, Druskeninkai. We did not go anywhere but Baltic countries. In early 1970s I submitted my documents to immigration for Israel. We did not get the permit, because the elder brother served at the border with China. I was no

willing to leave without son, though I regret it now, as later on sons left without me.

My children grew up in the true international family. Of course, we did not mark Jewish holidays, but we always had matzah at home for Pesach. We also respected Lithuanian traditions. My children went to Lithuanian school and considered Lithuanian to be their mother tongue. When the elder turned 16, he chose Jewish nationality for his passport. I had a serious talk with him and said that living with that nationality would not be easy. My son replied if he Shlema Meerovich was put as Lithuanian in his passport, it would make people laugh. Younger sons followed the example of their brother. All of them chose Jewish nationality for their passports.

My second son Alyukas, also became a tailor. He was also married to a Lithuanian, whom he divorced. His son from the first marriage named after my twin brother Benjamin, is living in Kaunas. Alyukas left for Israel. He met his wife Ira there and got married for the second time. They are currently living in Jerusalem.

Younger son Evgeniy is living Kaunas. He is an electrician. His wife, a Lithuanian Layma, is a nurse. They have a son Bandas, who is studying at the university, and a 7-year old daughter.