

# Leonid Poberezhskiy Biography

Leonid Poberezhskiy  
Biography

Ukraine, 2002

[My family background](#)

[Growing up](#)

[During the War](#)

[After the War](#)



I was born in Uman in 1924. My mother and father were born in the town of Dashev Vinnitsa region. My father Ovsey Petrovich Poberezhskiy was born in 1893. I have little information about my father's parents. I never met Pyotr Poberezhskiy, my grandfather on my father's side. I only know that he worked at the sugar factory in Dashev.

My grandfather had died before I was born. But I know no details about the circumstances of his death or any dates. I remember grandmother Heina, my father's mother. However, these are dim memories that I have. There were two children in their family.

My father had a younger sister, but I don't remember her name. My father's sister and my grandmother Heina lived their life in the town of Dashev. I used to spend my summers with them. I remember my grandmother's wooden house with two rooms. There was an orchard and a pond near the house. My father told me that he and his sister used to swim in it in their childhood.

There were many Jews living in Dashev. Jews and Russian and Ukrainian people got along very well and helped each other. They were good neighbors and even pogroms didn't reach the town of Dashev. The majority of the population was working at the sugar factory. There was a synagogue in Dashev but I had never been there. Grandmother Heina was not very religious and she only observed traditional Jewish holidays and Sabbath. She didn't go to the synagogue often, only on holidays. She had beautiful festive dishes and I remember her lighting the candles at Pessah. My grandmother cooked delicious meals, and never afterwards did I eat anything that tasted even nearly like her cooking. That is probably all I can tell about my father's mother and his sister.

Grandmother Heina and her younger daughter perished in the ghetto in Dashev. No Jews evacuated from Dashev and each of them was exterminated in the ghetto, each and every Jew. My father told me that people collected some money to install the monument to the victims of Holocaust in Dashev and they installed it, but the Jewish population never lived in Dashev again.

My father's family was poor. Grandmother Heina went to clean and do the laundry in richer houses to provide for her children. My father and his sister had a hungry childhood. Grandmother Heina couldn't give her children good education. My father went to the cheder school in Dashev.

After finishing this school he started helping his mother. He became a carpenter's apprentice and then became his assistant and worked as such until he got married. My mother's name is Inna Isaakovna, nee Shehtman, born in 1900. I can tell much more about her family. I have known my mother's parents very well; we used to live with them our whole life.

My mother's father Itsko Shehtman was born in 1872. I don't know where he was born. My grandfather studied in cheder and then he finished Yeshiva. He had been married by that time. They lived in Dashev. After finishing Yeshiva my grandfather was a rabbi in Uman for some time. After the revolution my grandfather refused to be the rabbi. He decided to take to a more useful activity as he used to say. I don't know exactly what he took to. He was always dressed in the same type of clothes. He always wore a black jacket and a black hat. My grandfather didn't wear paces and he had a long beard. His mother tongue was Yiddish. He spoke Russian slowly and with a strong Jewish accent.

My grandmother Haya-Rukhlia was born in 1875. I don't know where she was born or her nee name. I can talk endlessly about my grandmother. I loved her dearly. I hardly remember any details of the life of our family in Uman. My mother told me that my grandfather and grandmother rented half a house from their landlords. There were 4 or 5 rooms in the house. Our family was renting two of them. I only remember my grandmother Haya-Rukhlia of our life in Uman. She was a lovely woman, very kind and loving. She was never spoiling me, as she was never spoiling her own children. But she was giving her love and care to me all her life. She was short and very lively. She was always working at several things at a time and telling me fairy-tales at the same time. Later when I grew up I found out that she was telling me Biblical stories in a way that I could understand what they were about. My grandmother was both kind and smart.

People always said that my grandfather was a very intelligent man. However, I think that my grandmother was more intelligent than he was. My grandmother had a great sense of humor but her jokes were not offensive. My grandmother was not a fanatic woman; she was against fanatics. She was a wife of a rabbi (rebetsen) and she observed all traditions, but she did it dutifully rather than from her own convictions. My grandmother usually wore long dark gowns and covered her head with a shawl only to go to the synagogue. Basically, she had more progressive views than my grandfather. My grandmother spoke Russian with a slight accent. My grandmother and grandfather spoke Yiddish with their children.

My grandparents had 6 children. They were all born in Dashev. My mother, born in 1900, was the oldest. The next child was Uncle Abram, born in 1902 and Uncle Semyon, born in 1904. The next was Anna (they called her Nyusia in the family), born in 1906, and Tsylia, born in 1908. The youngest was the son Matvey (Motl), born in 1911. I knew my mother's brothers and sisters; they lived with us in Kiev for some time.

Although my grandfather was a rabbi, his children, including the girls, received both Jewish and secular education. This was a different attitude, as before the revolution the Jewish families traditionally taught their girls only what they might need for their further family life. All their daughters finished primary school and their sons studied in trade schools [besides 4 years of general education, the boys also learned some profession in such schools].

My parents knew each other since their childhood as they both lived in Dashev. This was a small town and people were acquainted with one another. They both went to the synagogue when they were in their teens, but then after the revolution most young people rejected the Jewish religion and traditions. It was the period of ruthless struggle against any religion. Believers had to keep their belief a secret. However, they were mostly the people of older generation. Younger people believed in the revolutionary slogans. My parents were no different. Both of them became atheists. My parents got married in 1922. They didn't have a wedding party. My grandfather Shehtman was trying to arrange a religious wedding for them but they just had a civil marriage ceremony. After their wedding my parents moved to the village of Tsybulevo, Vinnitsa region. My father worked as a carpenter there. My mother was a housewife. In 1923 they moved in with my mother's parents in Uman. In Uman my father worked in a carpenter's shop. They made stools, kitchen utilities, wooden spoons, etc. In 1924 I was born. I am their only child.

In 1932 our family moved to Kiev. My mother's brother Abram lived there. He became a commercial director of furniture factory and received a 3-room apartment in 4, Institutskaya Street (in the center of Kiev). All of us, including my grandfather and grandmother moved in with him. Abram was a bachelor. But our whole big family lived in his 3-room apartment. There were 8 of us: my grandparents, my mother and father and I, and my favorite: my mother's brother Uncle Syunia (Semyon) and my father's younger sister Tsyliya. Prior to our arrival my mother's sister Nyusia lived in this apartment. About 1928 she married a talented engineer Naum Berdichevskiy and moved to her husband in Moscow. They didn't have any children. Matvey (Motl), the youngest of the children, moved to Moscow and then to Sverdlovsk where he lived his whole life. Motl was a bachelor and he never got a wife.

After moving to Kiev my grandfather led his customary way of life. There was a synagogue in Schekavitskaya Street in Podol (it's still there). My grandfather often went to the synagogue. They observed Sabbath and celebrated Jewish holidays at home. I remember Pessah very vividly. The whole family got together at the table, besides Uncle Syunia. He was a communist and avoided staying with us on such days, he left home or based in the room, but never sat with us for the table. But my parents, Tsyliya and Abram did not mind celebration of these holidays. My grandmother cooked traditional Jewish meals: stuffed fish and goose neck and strudel with jam and nuts, (I do not know whether this was kosher food but it tasted delicious). There were no prayers or singing cantos at the table; this was just getting together at the dinner table. My grandmother was a great cook. I have never had clear soup as delicious as my grandmother could make it. There was always matsa in the house. This was our tribute to the tradition, as we usually ate a lot of bread in the house. I understand this religious surrounding was mostly arranged for my grandfather. Even when I became a pioneer and an ardent atheist I still enjoyed sitting at the festive table with my family.

Abram worked at the furniture factory. He had no higher education. He was a self-made man. Uncle Syunia studied at the Kiev Polytechnic Institute and worked as engineer at the dock named after Stalin. He was an active Komsomol member and party activist. He worked all his life at this dock named after Stalin. Uncle Syunia got married in some time after we moved to Kiev. He moved in with his wife after he got married. They lived in Podol. In 1940 their son Grigoriy was born. Aunt Tsyliya finished an accountant school and got a job in a bank. My mother went to work there as an

accountant, too. She never learned this profession but she was very smart and started working by herself very soon. Her management appreciated her performance and my mother liked her work. I was actually raised by my grandmother. My mother changed his job for a power plant where he became a deputy manager and I went to school that same year.

We lived in a separate apartment without any neighbors. There was a big kitchen in this apartment and we installed a partition to separate a part of the kitchen for ourselves. Therefore, my mother, my father and I got a room and apart of the kitchen just for ourselves. There was a big bed for my parents in the room, a big box that was serving as a bed for me, a table and two chairs. That was all furniture that we had. There was a bathroom, too, but there was no bath or shower there, only a sink and a tap. We were cooking on primus kerosene stoves. There was running water and a toilet in the apartment. There was a Dutch stove to heat the apartment. Uncle Abram brought pieces of wood from his furniture and we were burning them to heat the apartment. This wood was stored in a shed in the yard.

We arrived in Kiev during the famine of 1932-33 in Ukraine. Who knows, perhaps our moving to Kiev rescued our family from starving to death. We starved in Kiev, too, but not as much as people did in villages. I remember that I asked them to give me a piece of bread as my birthday present. I saw dead people at that time. There were two unfinished houses in our neighborhood. We called them “caves” and went to play there. There were often corpses of the people that had starved to death found in those caves. Some of them died because they got something to eat but their body could not accept all that food and they also died.

My grandmother was a housewife and she was raising me as well. My parents were busy at work and they couldn't afford to get a baby sitter or a housemaid. But my grandmother didn't mind it at all. I loved to watch my grandmother working in the kitchen. She was telling me her Biblical stories, about creating world, about God, about seeds apostles' etc. Sometimes she told me stories about her children and how they used to be in their childhood. It was all very interesting. I spent a lot of time with my friends in the yard. They were living in our or in the neighboring houses. We were Jewish, Ukrainian or Russian children but nobody ever cared about nationality. We had different values – it was important to throw a ball farther than the others or run faster or keep from crying when they injured their knee when playing a game. We played different games; I wouldn't even remember exactly what they were about.

In 1932 I went to a Russian school. There were Jewish schools in Kiev at that time, but not one in our neighborhood. We studied Ukrainian and German languages. It was a school for girls and boys. There were about 30 children in our class. These were children of different origins, but origins were not important for us. We were all friends. I remember how our class went to the Jewish children's theater to see a performance in Yiddish. I had to translate there. The play was called “Eldorado”. It stood for the happy Soviet country where all people, especially Jews, were supposed to try getting to. The children loved this performance. My classmate Shurik Dolinskiy also interpreted. He wasn't a Jew but he was taking private German classes and understood Yiddish. There were Jewish teachers at school as well.

I was good at all subjects, especially the Arts. I even read at night under the blanket. I was also fond of football. I loved to play football. I didn't have special football boots and my mother often told me off for my torn shoes. I was basically clothed poorly, as I realize now, but I didn't care

about it.

When I turned 10 I became a pioneer. I was very proud of it. We were brought up with the communist ideas. Being 10 years old I was sure that there was no God and I was trying to explain this to my grandfather. We were explained at school that pioneers were bound to educate the “retrograde layers of the society” as they were called then. Religious people were considered to be retrogrades and I was trying to reveal the truth to my grandfather. My grandmother was moderately religious and my father and my mother were atheists, of course. Besides festive family dinners in the house no other traditions were kept, only my grandfather regularly visited a synagogue, but he did this quietly, without drawing anybody’s attention to it.

I remember one funny occasion. A rabbi from Odessa came on a visit to my grandfather. I couldn’t help taking advantage of this occasion. I opened the door to the room where they were sitting and shouted “There is no God! It is a medical fact”. My grandfather told me to stop bothering them. But the Odessa rabbi asked me to come closer to him and asked me what I had in my hand. I said it was an ink-pot. He asked me what it was made from. I said “glass”. Then the rabbi asked me where the glass came from. I had no idea whatsoever. And then he told me something that I understood a long time afterwards. He said “What you don’t know or what you don’t understand is God”. And that was it – if you don’t know something you better keep silent.

I usually spent my summer in Kiev. My parents were busy working and couldn’t travel with me. My father was working at the logistics department at the cotton-spinning factory. My mother was working as an operations assistant at the bank. My friends and I spent our time at the Dnipro River. We swam and lay in the sun. We liked to go to the cinema.

My closest friend was Misha Berkovich a Jewish boy from our yard. His father was director of the factory. He was imprisoned in 1937 and Misha’s mother was left alone with her 2 children. Misha had a younger sister. They lived in Luteranskaya Street in our neighborhood. Misha and I liked to take walks in Kiev, in its famous parks and gardens. During the war I lost the trace of Misha’s family. He perished on the front. I only know that his father was rehabilitated after the war. He even regained his position of director of the factory.

I remember the year of 1937. There were 2 buildings in our street. One was inhabited by the military high officials and in another one employees of the Central Communal bank lived. A black vehicle with bars on its windows came to the entrance of the building and took away its tenants. The family of this individual had to move out, as a rule. Nobody ever knew their whereabouts and nobody ever saw any of them again. This was what I saw and what was happening just nearby.

At that time I often argued about these arrests with Uncle Abram, because I didn’t quite agree with him on this subject. Uncle Abram condemned the Party and the government and thought that it was criminal to arrest innocent people. He was convinced that the “revolutionary troika” (3 individuals even without proper education, but they had to be communists) had no right to bring in a verdict to people and that there had to be a court if they were guilty. As a rule such “troikas” had two types of verdicts: 10 years in camps or death execution. Their verdicts were based on their “revolutionary feelings”, as newspapers wrote at that time rather than laws. We were continuously told that our country was surrounded by enemies of the Soviet power and each citizen had to be on guard. I believed it all being as young as I was. Only later I realized that my uncle’s evaluation of what was going on was correct and that he was a very reasonable man. He predicted a lot that was

going to happen and that there was a lot of lying about the reality in the country.

At 14 I became a Komsomol member. But at that time, perhaps, I was more influenced by my uncle's ideas or I myself was looking at things in a different way but I didn't have that much faith that everything happening in our country was correct. There were children from repressed families in our class. Of course, we were devoted to the communist ideas like all Soviet people. But we had inner resistance to what was happening then. Certainly this was at the level of our subconsciousness, but we believed firmly that what the Soviet Authorities were doing was right and if there was any injustice it was likely to be some kind of a mistake rather than their cruel intent. I learned the truth about what was going on in our country then much later. However, we had some inner resistance to the events that expressed in our sympathy towards those who got into this meat grinder. We sympathized with the children whose parents suffered from the repression at the end of the 1930s. The authorities established a new position of the Komsomol organizer from the Central Committee of All-Union Lenin Communist Union of Young People. Even we, kids, realized all the absurdity of the things around. I remember them calling a meeting to condemn the girl whose uncle was repressed. All children present at the meeting understood that she was not to blame. She was only a child when she saw her uncle for the last time. This Komsomol leader was trying to pull the words of condemnation from us but he failed. He was angry and so were we. We didn't issue any reprimand to her, we just drew the fact of her uncle's guilt to her attention and that was all. I remember well our attitude and how we were unwilling to condemn her. There was no specific Jewish issue at that time. Therefore, it couldn't be of our concern.

Hitler came to power in this time. In 1939 the German army occupied Poland. This was the time of very active anti-Hitler propaganda. It calmed down after execution of the non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union, which fall into history under name Molotov-Ribentrop pactum. But there was still some tension. People had a feeling that there was going to be a war. Everybody understood that we were going to fight against the fascists. In June 1941 I finished my 9th year at school. The war began on 22 June. I remember artillery salvos, as heavy as sighs. This day was the borderline between our former and our future life.

My father evacuated to Astrahan along with the factory that he was working at. My grandfather went with him. My mother evacuated to Voronezh along with the bank where she was working. Later she moved to Chimkent. My grandmother and I went with mother. Uncle Abram went to the recruiting office on the 1st days of the war and was sent to the front. Uncle Syunia also went to the front. Motl was working at the military plant that evacuated to Sverdlovsk from Moscow. He worked at this plant throughout the war. Aunt Nyusia and her husband stayed in Moscow. Her husband was working at the military department. Aunt Tsylia evacuated along with the bank.

In Chimkent we rented a room. My mother was working in the bank and I went on the 10th form at school. Later in 1942 my grandfather came to Chimkent he wanted to live with us, with grandmother. I finished school in 1942 and was recruited to the army. I was sent to a military school and then entered Infantry College in Kharkov that was evacuated to Namangan then. I was a successful student at first but then I got worse in my studies. I can't even explain why it happened so but it was a great disappointment for me. I was eager to become a military official. There were few other Jewish cadets in this college. I remember our company deputy commanding officer was a Jew. After finishing the college in 1943 I went to the front in the rank of lieutenant. I was sent to

airborne division based near Krivoy Rog. While I was still in college my father visited me. He brought some flat bread, Kazakh or Uzbek, I don't know. My mother and father saw me off to the front. We were evacuated and my mother saw me wearing my uniform and. She cried after I was gone, but before this they both kept their spirits as they thought that it was my duty to defend our Motherland even if I was their only son.

I remember the first battles. It was a horrific sight. I was only 19 years old, and never before had I seen any war scenes and knew nothing about the war tactics. I saw quite young people dying and this was terrible, but we had to follow the orders of our commanders to march into a battle. However, I wasn't there for a long time. In November 1943 during the German counterattack I was severely wounded. This happened in the vicinity of Krivoy Rog. The Germans were shooting from automatic guns and I got wounded in my leg, my hand, breast and throat. Germans picked me up and threw into a truck with other captives. Later the Soviet authorities often asked me why Germans hadn't shot me. I was a captive officer and a Jew. I believe it was due to circumstances. The German officer responsible for us asked me what my nationality was and I replied that I was a Jew. But I was wounded in my throat and couldn't speak louder; therefore, that German officer couldn't hear what I said. And somebody beside me in the line told me to keep silent. They bandaged me with paper bandage and threw me into a barrack. I didn't get any medical treatment. But I was young and my wounds began to heal. At this time I got spotted fever and was sent to the typhoid barracks. Hardly anybody survived there. But I did. There was a doctor in this barrack from Kiev. I remember that he treated me in a special way. I can't remember the details or how long it lasted. I only remember that I was eating potato peels. I remember crying when I came to my senses after this severe disease. I believe that this typhoid barrack saved me from being shot as a Jew. Germans didn't even come close to this barrack. After the war was over and we were liberated by Americans I left home. KGB (State Security service) checked me a lot but there were many witnesses of how I was wounded and I was restored in my military rank. I demobilized in 1946. I wrote Aunt Nyusia in Moscow hoping that she had some information about my parents. It turned out that my parents were in Kiev already and they lived in our former apartment in Institutskaya Street. They had their previous jobs. My father was working at the cotton spinning factory and my mother worked at the bank. I went to work. I had to postpone my studies in the Institute. I got a job of a laborer at a plant and worked there for a year.

The war impacted my family. Uncle Abram perished and we didn't know the date or the place of his death. Uncle Syunia returned from the front. He went to the front on 22 or 23 June 1941. He was wounded twice. This resulted in his untimely death. He went to work at the dock. In 1960 he went on a business trip to a village and passed away there. His son Grigoriy lives in Kiev. Matvey stayed in Serdlovsk. His plant was evacuated there during the war and after the war there was an affiliate of this plant left in town. Matvey worked there all his life. Matvey got married in Sverdlovsk. I never met his wife. They didn't have any children. Uncle Matvey died in Sverdlovsk in 1970.

Aunt Tsylya returned to Kiev and kept working in the bank. She became Head of a department in the bank. It was an important position considering that she was a Jew and not a Party member. Tsylya worked even after she retired. She lived in Institutskaya Street near the bank. She had a son David born in 1936. He finished an institute and defended his thesis. He still lives in Kiev. Aunt Tsylya died in 1980. Aunt Nyusia got a job at the Ministry of Defense in Moscow. She didn't have any children. After her husband Naum Berdichevskiy died in 1970s Aunt Nyusia moved somewhere.

I can't remember the place. Aunt Nyusia died in 1980. None of our family was shot in the Babiy Yar. However, Babiy Yar has and will be my personal pain.

After the war we knew there was anti-Semitism in Kiev in our everyday life and in the official institutions. I realized that it would be impossible for me to enter the university. Jews were practically not accepted there. Therefore in 1947 I entered extramural History Department in Moscow University. By that time I quit my job at the plant and worked at the library of the Academy of Sciences, in the department of microfilms. I went to Moscow to take my exams.

I remember well the year of 1948. This was the beginning of struggle against the rootless Cosmopolitans. None of the Jews - culture workers or scientists or art could be sure that he would not be blamed of promoting the hostile ideology in his sphere of activities. The roughly fabricated "cases" were published in newspapers and there were meetings going on continuously where they were condemning people. It didn't touch upon me or my family but everybody could feel this different attitude. At that time I wasn't a Party member. I decided to behave as if nothing had changed since 1917. That was it. It became a rule and a way of life. Everything was the same and I had nothing to do with what they wrote or talked about. It was of course the policy of an ostrich, hiding his head in the sand, but it helped me to survive.

Something of an interest happened to my grandfather. Sometime in 1946 he was invited to the Committee for religion and offered a job there. My grandfather decided that it was a liquidation committee [Such committees were established to eliminate an organization, including a religious or cult organization]. My grandfather refused telling them that he knew why they invited him. But they convinced him to take this job, telling him that he would be an active rabbi. This was true: my grandfather was a rabbi at the Podol synagogue until his last day. This was single in Kiev acting synagogue. At first the parish didn't trust my grandfather because he was nominated by the authorities. My grandfather used to say that the thought he was a Bolshevik rabbi. But some time passed and my grandfather enjoyed much love and respect of his parish. In 1951 my grandfather was sent as a delegate from Kiev to the anti-fascist congress of representatives of different religions. There were Muslim, Christian Orthodox, Judaists and many other clergymen. They were speaking for the peace in the world and signed an appeal to the people of the world. My grandparents followed all Jewish traditions. My grandfather went to the synagogue on holidays and spent almost all his time there. They had kosher meals in the synagogue, and at the most important holidays we had family dinners at home.

What was not very good for my grandfather's job was that he spoke with a prominent Jewish accent and his Russian was not so good. His Russian and his accent made his listeners laugh. Therefore, he was restricted in speaking in front of other than Jewish audience. My grandmother also had an accent, but it wasn't such a prominent accent. Their mother tongue was Yiddish and not Russian, so it was no surprise.

I remember Stalin's death in 1953. I remember that my grandfather was very ill at that time. We didn't tell him about Stalin's death, we wanted him to keep quiet. It turned out he wasn't concerned at all. When I told him that Stalin had died he exclaimed "Ah, what an executioner died!"



In 1952 I met my future wife. I was working at the library of the Academy of Sciences. Her name was Zinaida Naishtut and she was a Jew, but it was of no importance then. Zina studied at the Theatrical College. We met at the theater. We dated afterwards and got married in 1952. We didn't have a wedding party, just a small dinner for our relatives and closest friends.

I moved in with my wife after the wedding. Zina's parents were born Kievites. I don't know where her grandfathers and grandmothers came from but the family lived in Kiev since 1912. I have no information about my wife's grandparents. Her parents were not religious. They never celebrated any Jewish holidays or remembered any Jewish traditions. Religion was something that Zina did not accept. They spoke Russian in her family. I don't know whether Zina's mother knew Yiddish but she never spoke it, she never even pronounced any words in Yiddish. Zina lived in one room with her mother Sophia Natanovna Naishtut (nee Schupak), born in 1896. She was a widow at that time. Sophia Natanovna worked at the calculator department. Ilia Zosimovich Naishtut, Zinaida's father, born in 1892 studied at the Mechanic Department of Kiev Polytechnic Institute. Before the war he worked as Chief engineer at the Sugartrust. During the evacuation their family was in Tyumashev, Kuibyshev region. In 1947 Ilia Zosimovich died. This happened when Zina had just finished school.

Zina couldn't even hope to find a job after she finished college (this was at the height of struggle against anti-Semitism). My acquaintances helped us to find a job at the Saltykov-Schedrin library. She still works there as Chief of the reading hall. We continued sharing the same room with Zina's mother. In 1955 our daughter Lilia was born. (about the wedding?). After the university I went to the village of Borodyanka to work as a history teacher there. [a village not far from Kiev]. It was my choice. I liked working with children. I worked in Borodyanka and then I was sent as Deputy Director to the Bobinets School, Borodyanskiy district. My family was staying in Kiev at this time. The villages were in the vicinity of Kiev and I could visit my wife and daughter at the weekends. I returned to Kiev in 1971. I got a job of History teacher at the extramural department, Institute of History. Teaching History was a difficult task then. Many facts were reflected in a different manner or were not mentioned at all. For example the cult of Stalin was denounced at the XXth Congress of the Communist party. But nobody ever mentioned what KGB was doing to the people. They never mentioned deportation of people for the reason that they presumably cooperated with Germans during the war. They never mentioned that Jewish people were exterminated in the Babi Yar. What they were saying was that Germans exterminated Soviet citizens there. One can give many such examples. But I did not stick to those directions. I was responsible for my work and tried to teach the actual History. I got along well with my students. There were Jewish students in the Institute, but they were few.

I also was in good relationships with the schoolchildren. They often came to my home. I was so happy that my schoolchildren remembered me and came to see me. Recently my first schoolchildren were on a visit here. Over 40 years passed since that time. They are all pensioners. But I remember them. 4 or 6 of them became Doctors of Sciences, quite a few of them worked as directors at schools and many work in Germany. At that time Jewish people were beginning to immigrate to Israel. I didn't blame them but it never occurred to my wife or me to leave our country. It must have been the influence of our communist upbringing. In 1955 my grandfather Itsko Shehtman died. My grandmother Haya-Rukhlia lived 5 years longer and left us in 1960.

My father died in 1975 and my mother died in 1980. They were 80 years old when they passed away. They lived in our old apartment in Institutskaya Street to where they returned after the war. My father worked at the cotton spinning factory and my mother worked as an operations assistant in the bank. They kept working for some time after they got retired but it became too much for them at some point of time. I always tried to support them giving them some money and spiritually. I visited them and they were always happy to see me. They asked me about my daughter and my wife. I worked a lot and had little time to spend with them. Now when I am of their age I understand how important care and attention are. Sophia Natanovna Naishput, my wife's mother, died in 1985.

My daughter Lilia Poberezhskaya entered the Department of the English language at Kiev University. After the University Lilia was a teacher at the School of languages and later she worked as a translator. She was an interpreter for Margaret Thatcher, Prime-Minister of Great Britain during her visit to Kiev. In 1980 she married Yuriy Sologubenko. Her husband is half Jew. He has a Russian mother. He got a diploma of Kiev Foreign Languages College. Their daughter Nina was born in 1982. Now she and her husband work for the Ukrainian Department of BBC. Yuriy is Manage of this Ukrainian Department and Lilia is Chief producer. They live in London. Lilia is on a long-term business trip to China presently.

My granddaughter Nina is 19. She finished school. She is a very talented girl. She loves theater and literature. She knows modern English literature well. She knows art and is fond of sculpture. She is just great. It's a pity that we see each other so rarely. Nina is aware of her Jewish roots and she has never been ashamed of it. However, my granddaughter, as well as her parents, is far from Jewish traditions or religion.

My wife and I live by ourselves. I am retired, but my wife still goes to work. It's not easy for her. The mother of our son-in-law helps us a lot. Her husband died recently and she lives alone. She is a very nice woman. She often visits us and supports us with the house chores. She is a big help to us. In the recent years I noticed a change in the attitude towards the Jews. There is no anti-Semitism on the state level. The cultural life is becoming more active. Jewish theaters come on tours. Jewish folk groups come on tours and we can go to watch Jewish movies. Ad I have noticed that not only Jews attend these events. Hosed, the Jewish Charity fund plays a big role in the development of the national self-consciousness. I go there sometimes to read Jewish newspapers or to listen to lectures. My wife doesn't keep me company. I guess she is still afraid to reveal her Jewish identity like she was in the past. It must be difficult for her to forget anti-Semitism and leave it behind. Now I know the Jewish holidays and know more about our traditions. However, I don't go to the synagogue. I have been raised as an atheist and this must be the reason. Besides, I have had an infarction and things are becoming more difficult to do. I'm very much interested in the life in Israel. Regretfully, I haven't had a chance to visit this country. The situation there gives me much concern. Why don't they leave the Jewish state in peace? This terrorism is just awful. I think it's even worse than a war. At least one realizes during a war that one is in the war. I do wish that everybody could live in peace, have no fear and be happy.