

Mina Smolianskaya With Her Husband Aron Shtempler And Sons



My husband, my sons and I. Photo made in Chernovtsy in 1954 after the 1st of May parade.

Our first son Victor was born in 1945. We were homesick and decided to move to Chernovtsy from Karaganda. We didn't even have a place to stay overnight. My husband found an abandoned attic with no windows. There were bare walls and bugs there. It was cold and empty. My husband and I picked some wood and made a fire to warm it up a little. We had some savings that we spent to accommodate this attic for a living. In 1946 our 2nd son Efim was born.

My husband was a skilled tailor. He studied in Bucharest before the war. He made men's and women's clothes. The only problem was that tailors did not receive money regularly. Only when an order was ready their clients paid them. Sometimes we didn't have money at all. We leased a part of our dwelling to have additional income. When our children went to school I went to work at the button factory. I was working with the button press that I had to pull. There were corns on my palms - it was hard work. I earned 360 rubles per month. I had to make 16 thousand buttons per shift. It was a challenging job.

After we moved to Chernovtsy we began to attend the synagogue. At the beginning I went there to please my husband but gradually I remembered what my mother had taught me. We only attended it on big holidays, we always knew the dates of Jewish holidays; there were calendars at the synagogue and our acquaintances had calendars. We didn't celebrate any holidays at home. We didn't have enough money to celebrate. Before I went to work we lived from hand to mouth and I took count of every kopek that we had. Later when I began to work in 1952 we began to celebrate holidays. We celebrated Pesach and I cooked gefilte fish and chicken. We had matzah and I made puddings. I mean, we had traditional food, but we didn't pray or conduct other rituals. I can't say

that I had any urge to observe traditions. I was raised during the Soviet period and celebrating Jewish holidays I only gave tribute to the memory of my parents. However, my children have always identified themselves as Jews. They know Yiddish. They were not circumcised.

My husband and I liked guests and parties. We celebrated Jewish and Soviet holidays. We took advantage of every opportunity to have guests and party. We had fun singing and dancing when getting together with friends. I didn't take any part in public activities after I got married and didn't take any effort to restore my membership in the party. I didn't obtain my party membership identity card and was not registered as a communist. So there was no registration information about me in Chernovtsy. I took no interest in politics, either. I was a married woman and had other things to care about.