

## Zakhar Benderskiy With His Wife And Friends



This is a picture of my second wife Sophia Lazko (in the center) and me with our friends from Lvov. The photo was taken in Chernovtsy on 9th May 1996. My first wife died in 1973. I got married for the second time in 1978. My wife is Jewish. She was born to an assimilated Jewish family in Chernigov in 1920. Her parents were engineers. She finished school and worked as a typist at a military unit in Chernigov. During the war she went to the front. She was a topographer at the army headquarters. After the war Sophia decided to go to Chernovtsy. She didn't want to go back to Chernigov where all her relatives had perished during the war. Sophia was a lab assistant at the sanitary-epidemiological facility in Chernovtsy. She's a very nice and kind woman. We are very close. We have common interests and friends. I'm so happy to have met her. The Soviet power forced us to forget Jewish traditions. It's too late for me to restore them. We didn't live a Jewish life. We only celebrate holidays in Hesed. Ukraine became independent and the Jewish way of life began to be restored. We have several Jewish communities in Chernovtsy. Hesed provides big assistance to us. We get food packages and medication. There are highly qualified doctors with Hesed. We also attend lectures, concerts and interesting films about Jews. We can get Jewish newspapers and magazines for free at Hesed. If it weren't for Hesed we would live a poor and miserable life. People that had been working their whole life receive a pension that's smaller than the fee they have to pay for their apartment and everyday things. It's very important that we can go out and meet people. Volunteers from Hesed visit us at home. We also have a nurse visiting us at home. It's very helpful and makes our life different. We celebrate Sabbath and all Jewish holidays with Hesed. There was a festive Purimshpil performance at the town theater on Purim. The synagogue is open. We don't go there often, but we always attend it on holidays and on the death anniversaries of our relatives. I'm 90 years old. I'm glad to have lived to the time when I can see it all with my own eyes.