

Grigoriy Sirotta With His Son And His Brother



This is a picture of me, my son Misha and my brother Yasha Sirotta. It was taken when we visited my brother in Liepaya in 1955. At the end of 1944 I was sent to Alma-Ata to study at the Kharkov higher flying training school, which was in evacuation in Kazakhstan. Sophia worked as a typist at the Kazakhstan telegraph agency. Later we were transferred to Lipetsk. That was an officer flying school with a two-year training school. We heard the news about the victory on 9th May 1945 en route from Alma-Ata to Lipetsk. After the war I stayed in the army, but I couldn't make a great career there. In 1948 open anti-Semitism began in the army. They didn't promote Jews, and their favorite subject of conversation was that Jews hadn't fought [during WWII] but were hiding in Tashkent instead. After the Doctors' Plot they said that Jews had killed Stalin. I had been a member of the Communist Party since December 1941, and I felt distrust towards me, although no one said anything publicly. There was no anti-Semitism in our everyday life, but the state policy was anti-Semitic. In 1947 my daughter Tatiana was born in Lipetsk and my son, Misha, named after my

older brother, followed in 1948. I served in Sakhalin, in the Far North, from 1949-1957. It was a hard and hungry time, but we were happy. We were young and far away from the commandment and enjoyed it. We lived in a huge barrack, in one of 30 rooms on the ground floor, with one common toilet. There were people of all nationalities. There were Georgians, Latvians and Ukrainians. There were two or three Jewish families, but nobody paid any attention to nationality. We shared everything we had. We had meals together, helped each other, celebrated holidays together, sang songs, went to the cinema and dancing. Of course, there was nothing Jewish left in me, we were all Soviet people. In 1958 I was transferred to Lvov in Western Ukraine. We went there, and I received a small apartment. I got to like this town. However, this was a place with anti-Semitic and anti-Russian demonstrations. Nonetheless we made friends with people of different nationalities; all honest and nice people. My children grew up in this town.