

Leonid Kotliar



This is a photo of me near our house in Kiev. My wife photographed me and I sent this photo to my sister Cecilia in Israel. Kiev, 2003.

My son couldn't get a job in Kiev and there were no prospects for him. Soon he married a Russian girl from Siberia. Her name was Yelena Paramonova. They moved to Novosibirsk. He became senior editor of documentaries there and Yelena lectured in Theatrical School. In 1974 my wife and I moved to our son in Novosibirsk. However, my wife Ghita couldn't live in Siberia due to the climate there and in 1976 we had to leave. When I imagined my problems with the Ministry of education in

Kiev due to my Jewish identity I decided to go to Poleskoye (90 km north of Kiev). They remembered me there and offered 5 schools. Ghita went to work as concertmaster in a club. We received a house and a garden and school paid our fees. My son often brought Vlada and Anton to spend their summer vacations with us.

On 21 December 1986 I lost my wife Ghita. She had congenital heart formation and Chernobyl disaster had this impact on her. When we buried her, an old Jewish man came to the cemetery. He said: 'She is a Jew and there has to be a prayer recited'. He recited the prayer.

I remarried in 1988. My second wife Ludmila Zhutnik was born in Kiev in 1926. Ludmila taught economics in technical schools in Kiev. I retired in the late 1980s and joined her in Kiev from Poleskoye. I couldn't imagine my life without working with children, so I was head of an artistic word studio in the district children's house for many years.

My wife and I do not go to the synagogue. We've remained atheists, but we attend Hesed where we celebrate Jewish holidays. We enjoy learning about Jewish culture