

Sonia Leiderman



My husband photographed me at my 50th birthday. This photo was taken during celebration my birthday, in the my flat in Mogilyov-Podolskiy in 1982.

In 1947 I went to work as the seller of a fish. So, I worked as a fish vendor in a kiosk at the central market for the rest of my life. I retired from there. It was hard work. There were no loaders and I had to carry heavy boxes with frozen fish and cut heavy briquettes into pieces. I never had a chance to sit down during the day: there were always customers lining up; I had no breaks. There was no heating in the kiosk: it was freezing in winter, and it was hot in summer. I didn't go on vacation trying to earn more. My customers liked me: I joked and was cheerful and tried to serve them as best as I could. There were 3 fish kiosks one next to another, but there were always people lining to my kiosk. It's a small town where people know each other, and I knew all of my customers. We celebrated Jewish holidays, when we lived with our parents. Our parents also celebrated Soviet holidays with us. In 1980s after my parents died we gave up religion and never again celebrated Jewish holidays. We celebrated birthdays of members of the family, New Year and Victory Day. The other Soviet holidays were just ordinary days off for us.

My son fell ill with measles at the age of 6. It developed into meningitis. Unfortunately, this disease had its aftereffects. David recovered physically, but he remained retarded. My son's ailment had an impact on my daughter. She was a healthy and smart girl, but men did not dare to marry her. Of course, all people in Mogilyov-Podolskiy knew about David's condition and were afraid that this disease could be hereditary. Then I met Igor Kotliar, a Jewish guy from Karaganda [Kazakhstan]. I

helped him to enter the trade vocational school and find a job at a store. I introduced my daughter Maya to Igor in 1975. They got married shortly after their acquaintance. They didn't have a Jewish wedding. My daughter and her husband lived with us. Maya worked as a shop assistant at the store. Their older daughter was born in 1977. She was named Zinaida after my older sister Zina who died from cancer in 1973. My second granddaughter Irina was born in 1984. She was named after my father, who died in 1981, the first letters in their names are the same.

We could hardly make ends meet. Besides, I tried to save some money hoping that when my husband and I retired, we would travel and enjoy ourselves. I took these savings to the bank. We had never traveled on vacation - we had to stay where our son was to take care of him. Besides, we didn't want to be a burden for our daughter, when we grew old.