

Sonia Leiderman With Her Husband Semyon Leiderman, Sister Etia Pekelis And Daughter Maya Kotliar



This photograph was taken in a restaurant in Mogilyov-Podolskiy. This was the only time my sister Etia came from Israel to visit us. She invited us to the restaurant. From left to right: my husband Semyon Leiderman, me, my sister Etia Pekelis and my daughter Maya Kotliar. This photo was taken in 1990.

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.

My sister Etia's family name was Pekelis. She never went back to school after the war. She had finished 6 forms at school before the war. Etia worked as an ice-cream vendor. Her husband worked at the mechanical plant. Etia had two daughters: Maya, born in 1951, and Sima, born in 1952. Zina and Etia lived with their own families. In the 1970s and her family moved to Israel.

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: old people need medications and doctors and this all requires money. We were hoping that we would manage at our old age having our savings, but then perestroika began, and all our hopes turned into ashes. The material level of living grew lower; our savings decreased in value and then were gone [The disintegration of the USSR in 1991 also resulted in the newly independent states introducing their own national currencies. Soviet Ruble ceased existing. Many people lost their life-time savings]. My husband and I were pensioners at this time. Again we were starving. Our pensions were hardly sufficient to

pay our apartment fees and just for the most necessary food.

I became an invalid in 2000. I was walking back home from work, when a man attacked me in the dark entrance of the building and stabbed me with his knife: and he did this just to snatch away my bag from me: there was just enough money in it to buy 100 gram of sausage! I had to stay in hospital for a long time. The doctors were very sympathetic to me, operated on me at no cost and brought me to recovery. The man cut my femoral artery and I lost my leg: they amputated it as high as above my knee. When I was in the hospital, my husband decided he didn't want an invalid of a wife and found another woman. Of course, I felt painfully hurt, but what could I do... I had to learn to live alone. I live with my daughter and her husband. They look after me and help me around. My sisters also remember me. I corresponded with Etia and Nyusia and they helped me with money.