

Leonid And Enna Aptekar



This is me with my wife Enna. This photo was taken shortly after the wedding. We were photographed by a street photographer. This photo was taken in Kiev in 1951.

I demobilized in April 1950. I went to Kiev to visit my mother's brothers Teviye and Gersh. It was very difficult to obtain a residence permit to stay to live in Kiev. My uncle Teviye, who was a roof maker in the Council of Ministers, managed to obtain a permit for me to reside in his place. I wanted to rent a room, but my uncle insisted that I stayed with him. I went to work at the 'Kist' company ['hand' in Russian] as a founder. The state anti-Semitism was quite visible already, but there were still many Jews in the shop. There were good earnings and bonuses in the shop. Shops also contributed money to the restoration of Kiev. During the Khrushchev rule our shop was converted into a small plant. A short while later I went to work at the photo goods factory where I worked 42 years. I started working with plastic and in due time I became a caster. I worked decently. My colleagues treated me with respect.

My acquaintances introduced me to my future wife. My wife Enna, nee Beilis, a Jew, was born in Kiev in 1921. Her father Volko Beilis was born in a village near Kiev. He was engaged in farming when he was young. Enna's mother was a housewife. After the revolution of 1917, when the Pale of Settlement was canceled, the family moved to Kiev. Enna was a middle sister of three of them: Tsylia, the oldest daughter, was born in 1916, and Lubov, the youngest one, was born in 1923. Their parents were religious and observed Jewish traditions, but their daughters grew up to be atheists. Enna and I got married in 1951. Enna's family was poor and we had to borrow money for the wedding. We had a common wedding. We had a ceremony at the registry office and in the evening we invited our close ones to the wedding dinner. I received an apartment from my plant. Our only daughter Svetlana was born in December 1952.

At this time one could not go to the synagogue or celebrate Jewish holidays openly, but my wife and I celebrated holidays to the extent we could afford. It was difficult to get matzah for Pesach

and we just had sufficient to keep it as a symbol of the holiday. We also had traditional Jewish food: sweet and sour stew, chicken broth, gefilte fish. It was a tradition, but also, the memory of my mama and grandma for me.