

## Leonid Aptekar



This is me photographed for the board of the Organization of Jewish veterans of the war. This photo was taken in Kiev in 1994.

In the late 1980s the Jewish life revived in Ukraine. At first these were books of Jewish writers, which had not been published in the USSR since about the 1930s. There were plays by Jewish writers staged in theaters and there were concerts of Jewish music. We were happy about it. Jewish newspapers and magazines started to be published, and various Jewish societies were established. The national segregation in Ukraine has mitigated. Jews can enjoy the freedoms and we are second-rate people no longer. There is a number of Jewish organizations, but the most significant among them for older people is Hesed. Jews get assistance from all over the world and Hesed is an

evidence of this. The Hesed helps us a lot. We also receive food packages and medical care. Hesed pays for surgeries and hospital bills. This is important since older people could hardly find such money. However, this is not all. The Hesed also takes care of the young generation. I have two grandchildren and one great grandson and Hesed did a lot to raise them Jewish.

I try to take part in the Jewish life. I subscribe to Jewish newspapers and magazines 'VEK' [monthly newspaper issued by the World Jewish Congress, circulation 5 000 copies], 'Evreyskie Vesty' ['Jewish news', the newspaper of the Jewish council of Ukraine, issued twice a month since 1990], magazine 'Ot Srdtsa k Srdtsu' ['From Heart to Heart', monthly magazine of the Chabad Lubavich movement, issued since 1992] and read them with interest.

I also got enrolled in the organization of Jewish veterans of the war, when it was established in the Jewish cultural society. I attend all meetings of the organization. They are always interesting. Veterans share their memories; we watch movies and discuss what we have read. There are concerts and lectures. We celebrate Jewish holidays, Victory Day and the Soviet army Day. Though the average age of our veterans is 80, we try to be active. Our veterans often make speeches at schools and higher educational institutions telling young people about what things were like. This must not be forgotten or it may happen again. It cannot be allowed.