

Minna Birman



This is me, Minna Birman, in the hallway in my apartment. This photo was taken in Odessa in 2002.

I live with my daughter Yekaterina. My son works as a programmer in Moscow maintaining computer networks of few companies. We do not celebrate Jewish holidays. I am not religious and my children aren't either. Back in the early 1980s I once went to the synagogue in Peresyp [in an industrial neighborhood on the outskirts of Odessa]. I went to see how Jews celebrated Pesach. They sent me onto the balcony where I was standing behind other women where I couldn't see anything from behind. Another time I went to the Osipov synagogue some time in 1999. I went

there to subscribe to the Jewish newspaper 'Shomrei Shabos'. It was a day off and there was a man on duty. I asked 'May I come in to look?' He replied 'Come in, are you a Jew?' 'Can't you tell?' 'Come in!' I came in and looked around. It beautiful, but it didn't stir any religious feelings in me.

I've been in touch with Jewish charity organizations for a long time since the early 1990s. At first I received humanitarian aid in the Palace of Culture named after Lesia Ukrainka in Tiraspol'skaya Square. When Gemilut Hesed began its activities I was almost the first one to enroll on its lists. My daughter and I receive food packages there. My daughter and I do sympathize with the rebirth of Jewish life in Odessa. We began to attend the Jewish center when it resided in the house of medical employees in Grecheskaya Street [late 1980s]. We also enjoyed attending concerts of cantors and performances of the Jewish Theater 'Shalom' that came on tour to Odessa several times. I am very much interested in the Jewish history and culture. I am now putting in order our family archive that is of interest to the community. Sometimes historians come to talk with me. I want to be of help to people.