

Lasar Blekhshtein, His Wife And Their Sons



This photograph was taken in 1980s and shows my family: Boris, me, Gede, Simon, and Erlend.

I worked at LENENERGO [the power company of St. Petersburg] at the department of automatic equipment.

My future wife came there to work, too. Her name was Gede Israelevna Kaplun. At that time she was 26 years old (she was a year younger than me: born in 1912). Her parents had got 3 daughters:

Ida, the youngest (she is still alive), my Gede, and Ella, the eldest (she has already died). It was a Jewish family, they arrived in Petersburg from somewhere, I do not remember the place. I did not know their father (he died earlier), but I was acquainted with their mother.

She had a great deal of personality, was independent and strict. And she brought up her daughters in her own spirit. She was not religious. Their family was of average culture.

My wife, for example, was not widely-read. But she was a clear head, a good expert and she was equal to the tasks of mother and wife.

We got acquainted in 1938. She graduated from the Electrotechnical College and was an electrical engineer. She understood that I was an indecisive boy-friend. So one fine evening I heard a doorbell. It was about midnight, and I usually went to bed early.

I had a room at the communal apartment and my neighbor opened the door for her. She understood that I was that sort of idiots whom it was better not to talk to much, she came in, undressed and got to my bed.

Our loving relations lasted 66 years, we lived in harmony. Only one misfortune: she passed away before me (several years ago); though women usually live longer than men.

When we got married, my wife was already going to give birth to our first child.

By 1941 our son was 10 months old. His name is Erlend. Erlend is a Norwegian name. You see, my wife Gede read a novel by Norwegian writer Sigrid Unset [1882-1949].

She received (to my knowledge) a Nobel Prize. Erlend is a hero of her novel Kristin Lavransdatter. My wife read the book and named our son Erlend. At home we called him Eric. He has got only one name (like the rest of my sons): nobody of them has Jewish name.

In Tashkent my wife gave birth to our second son. It happened in 1943. We called him Simon. Why Simon? Why not Solomon (in honor of my brother)? You see, we were not sure that my brother was alive.

Therefore we wanted to call our baby not Solomon (in case my brother was alive), but we wished the name to sound similar. That was why we called our son Simon.

Since that time we called my brother Monya and my son Sima. We returned to Leningrad after the end of the war and in 1946 our third son Boris was born.

The elder son Eric graduated from the Conservatory, he is a chorister. We meet seldom. His family is not fine: 12 years ago he lost kidneys, his wife is sick with cancer, his daughter is about 29, but not married, his son got divorced and is not happy with his second wife...

My second son Simon left for Israel 11 years ago. Their life in Israel is not so good now. He is an engineer (graduated from the Electromechanical College), but works as a yard keeper.

Several years ago he was a worker at a plant. He has got two girls: 20 and 22 years old. They are my pride and happiness, because they are beautiful, good, and talented! His wife is a chemist. Simon never calls me, his daughters or their grandmother sometimes phone me.

My younger son Boris is my beloved boy. Yesterday we visited a steam bath together. He is an engineer, graduated from the Polytechnical College. 23 years he worked in Norilsk.

He often goes to business trips to solve different serious problems at different metallurgic plants: people trust him. He has got a daughter Galina.

Her first marriage was not successful; and now they live together with a guy and have a child of 4 years old, but they are not married officially. They often visit me.

My children and grandchildren know that they are Jewish, but they do not live Jewish life. Only Daniil, my grandson arranged manufacturing of matzah (he is a businessman) somewhere in the suburb of St. Petersburg.