

Isabella Karanchuk With Her Mother Raisa Lerman And Brother Roman Lerman



This is me, Isabella Lerman, on the right in the lower row, behind me is my mother Raisa Lerman, my brother Roman Lerman is beside her. This photo was taken in Kiev in 1958, we got photographed before he had to go to the army, and when he was on service he always had this photo with him. In 1944 I entered a Construction technical School in Kiev. These were hard years. There was famine in 1946-47, as hard as the one in 1932-33. We were provided pies with pluck filling at school. I sold them to buy some food for my brother. I finished my technical school in 1949 and got a job assignment at the department of construction and management of governmental buildings. This was a very good job. It is strange, but the anti-Semitic campaigns of struggle against rootless cosmopolites or poisoning doctors in the late 1940s had no impact on me, probably because I always treated people nicely and they returned this attitude. Nobody abused me or allowed any expressions against Jews in my presence. After two years of work I received a room in a communal apartment in a two-storied house in Kreschatik. It's hard to say for sure, but there were more than fifteen neighbors in this apartment. We all had our own doorbell, a bulb in the corridor and electric power meter. There was no toilet, bathroom or kitchen in the apartment. There was a tap and a sink. We ran to the toilet in the yard, washed in a tub in the room and cooked on the primus stove in the room, but we were happy to have a room for us. I lived in this apartment for many years. Two years after finishing the technical school I entered the All-Union Extramural Construction College. There was an academic center of this college in Kiev and I attended classes every evening. I also went to work at the Giprozdrav design office responsible for development of designs of health care institutions: hospitals, recreation centers and polyclinics. I worked there as an engineer till I retired. I joined the party here and this was a contentious move of mine: I believed in communist ideas and like my father I believed it to be my duty to join the first

rows of its builders. Many of my colleagues were Jews, but I still did not segregate people by their nationality. I believed in good attitudes all my life. My mother worked as a seamstress at the factory and worked there till she retired in 1955. I had to take care of my brother: watch his studies, attend parents' meetings at school, and orientate him at some vocation. My brother loved me dearly and introduced me to his friends. We were hard up in those years, and besides, it was hard to buy anything in shops. I bought my first dress at the 'flea' market where people were selling things that they received in parcels from abroad at fabulous prices. I paid my moth's salary for this dress. Later my mother made my clothes and I always dressed nicely. I had many friends. We got together on holidays and went to the cinema. There were also guys among them, but somehow I never tried to develop closer relations with any of them and they called me a 'good pal'. I even decided I was not made for a family life and dedicated myself to my mother, brother and work. In 1961, when I was over 30, a colleague of mine introduced me to an interesting young man. He had divorced his wife few years before. We saw each other for some time before he proposed to me. We got married in 1962. My brother Roman worked as an electrician after finishing a technical school. He married a Jewish girl, but it didn't work out. They had two children: son Yevgeniy and daughter Yelena, when Roman divorced his wife. However, they kept good relationships. In the late 1970s they moved to Israel and Roman followed them there some time later. Roman didn't remarry and began to live near his children. When Yelena remarried and moved to Moscow with her family, Roman followed them there. Now he lives in Kiev, having a citizenship in Israel and an apartment in Kiev.