

Arkadi Yurkovetski With His Mother Polia Yurkovetskaya, Father Efim Yurkovetski And Brother Igor Yurkovetski



This is our family. My parents sitting: my mother Polia Yurkovetskaya and my father Efim Yurkovetski. Standing: my younger brother Igor is on the left and I, Arkadi Yurkovetski, on the right. This photo was taken in Tomashpol in 1946.

On 16 March 1944 Soviet troops entered Tomashpol and liberated us from the ghetto. All Jews came into streets. They were happy about liberation. Of 5 thousand Jews that were in the ghetto at the beginning of the war only about a thousand survived. We kept staying in our house.

I went to the 6th grade of a Ukrainian school. My brother went to the 1st one. There was no anti-Semitism in those years. There couldn't be any demonstrated by people that were helping us in the ghetto. I joined Komsomol in the 8th form. I cannot say that I was eager to become a Komsomol member, but everybody was admitted and so was I. After finishing the 8th grade I had to support the family. I became my father's apprentice and in half year I began to work by myself. I also attended an evening higher secondary school. I finished the 10th grade with only two 'good' marks. The rest of them in my certificate were 'excellent'.

My father continued attending a prayer house on Sabbath and Jewish holidays after the war. He prayed at home every day, read Torah and the Talmud. We celebrated Sabbath and Jewish holidays at home. Of course, we couldn't afford such festive meals as we had before the war, but even if we only had soup with no meat and potato pudding at Pesach there was always matzah at home. Our mother sold bread that we received per bread coupons to buy matzah flour. She baked matzah at home.

In 1950 I went to serve in the army. I was sent to an 'initial military training unit' in Chernovtsy. Since I had secondary education and beautiful handwriting I was taken to serve in staff service of a

division where I served 3.5 years. There were 8 clerks and I was the only Jew among them. We stayed in a room at the headquarters. I never faced anti-Semitism during my service. I got along well with my fellow comrades. I had awards for excellent performance and studies. I was allowed to leave the unit after 18:00 hours. Twice a year on I was allowed a 10-day leave: on 1st May [Labor Day] and 7th November. My parents were very happy about it.

My mother died in April 1953. My mother was 51 years old. I went home. I cried bitterly feeling. She was buried according to the Jewish tradition near her father's grave. My father recited the Kaddish over my mother's grave. I stayed at home few days before I went back to my military unit. In 1954 I demobilized from the army.

My younger brother finished a higher secondary school in Tomashpol. He studied very well. He only had one 'good' mark, the rest were excellent. His single good mark was for the Ukrainian language. They didn't want to award a gold medal to a Jew for his successes in studies. My father was very upset and even complained of school authorities, but it didn't help. My brother successfully passed his entrance exams to the Mechanical Faculty of Zaporozhie Machine Building College.