

Rimma Leibert



This is me. This photo was taken in Ternopol in 1958, I am a student of the technical school.

I went to a Russian school in Yavorov in 1947. In 1950 my brother Eugeniy was born. My mother was a housewife. Boris earned well and we were doing rather well in this regard. In summer we went on family vacations to the Crimea. We rented a little hut at the seashore and enjoyed the sun and the sea, each other and doing nothing for few weeks in a row. These were the happiest moments of my life. I clearly identified myself with the Jewish nation since my early childhood and not in association with Jewish holidays or traditions. I didn't have these, but I caught hostile glimpses and heard whispers, sometimes direct insults. To make the long story short, I never felt one of them among Russian and Ukrainian children. I always felt inferior about it and tried to draw no attention to my person. In the course of time this type of conduct became my way of life and I've remained quiet and distant. I wasn't the best student at school, but I wasn't among the worst either. I didn't take part in any public activities and was always eager to come back home to enjoy the warm and cozy atmosphere of my family. In 1957 my stepfather got a job in Ternopol. I finished the 10th form in this town.

I liked chemistry and was attracted by medicine, when at school. After finishing school I tried to enter the Medical College for two years, but... it was next to impossible for a Jewish girl to get there. On the third year I submitted documents to the Faculty of Chemistry of the Polytechnic College. Some time before I went to work at the chemical laboratory of the sugar factory - this was the vocation I was going to learn. However, I failed to enter the college again. They reasoned this by saying that I didn't have sufficient work experience. I worked at the sugar factory some time

going home after night shifts across the dark town. It was next to impossible to get another job. Only on the fourth year I entered the Lvov Technical School of Cinema Logistics only because they didn't get sufficient number of students against their requirements. After finishing it I got employment at the Ternopol Department of Cinema Logistics where I worked as an engineer/economist till retirement. I also entered the extramural department of Kiev College of Public Economy and finished it. I had no conflicts or problems at work. Everything went quiet. I dutifully did my work as an engineer of the cinema physical plant. I got a small salary that was only enough buy sufficient food, necessary clothes and spend one week per year in the Crimea. I've never dreamed of having a car, a dacha or traveling far away. However, the majority of people in the USSR lived like this, and I never felt uncomfortable about it.

I've never met a man, whom I might fall in love with and who would be close spiritually to me. Firstly, there've never been Jews in my surrounding, and I've felt antagonism from others. Generally, I've been humble in life and it's been hard for me to make a closer acquaintance with somebody. It seems to me, I've grown up in the warm atmosphere of our home and was afraid that I would not love or be loved. I had friends and we went to the cinema and theaters and on tours together, but there was nobody with whom I might want to live my life. At work I was an active Komsomol member and even applied to the party, but the party district committee invited me there telling me that I wasn't mature enough to join the party. This was another demonstration of anti-Semitism. My stepfather felt so sorry for me. He told me to not reapply to the party. I became even quieter, worked mechanically and tried to not stand out. So I kept living in the apartment with mama, stepfather and my brother's family.