

Bella Chanina With Her Mother Sarah Fichgendler



This is me, Bella Chanina, with my mother, Sarah Fichgendler, nee Rosenthal, in our apartment. This photo was taken in 1962 in Kishinev. At that time I was fond of photography and had a Zenit camera. I asked my father to take a photo of my mother and me and then I made this photo by myself.

From the mid-1950s I began to work in the Republican Statistical Department. In 1963 I was appointed chief of the Department of Agricultural Statistics. Jews weren't given such positions usually. Chief of Department Ivan Matveyevich Vershinin had to obtain the approval of the Central Department of Statistics in Moscow, and of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Moldova. The Central Committee wouldn't have approved a Jew for this position, and this was their policy. Ivan Matveyevich played a trick: he obtained approval from Moscow and they issued an order of my appointment for this position and then he notified the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Moldova of the fact. There were about 150 employees in the department, but one could count the Jews on the fingers of one hand. This was the result of state anti-Semitism. I worked in this position for 16 years till I retired. I had good records. We were a team in my department. We only had one man, Semyon Naumovich Litviak, a Jew, he worked with us till he retired. He was a very good employee. After him we didn't employ men to our department. I thought they were not as good employees as women. The department of which I was chief was called a factory of chiefs of departments. Many of my former colleagues became chiefs of departments later. I let them quit willingly, but with a big regret.

I and my husband Grigoriy Chanin lived with my parents. My mother helped me about the house. She also did the cooking. She died in June 1971. We buried my mother at the Jewish cemetery, but not according to Jewish traditions.