

## Dora Puchalskaya With Her Friends



This is me, Dora Puchalskaya (nee Gitman), in the lower row, the one on the left, and my fellow students in Verkhovka village, Vinnitsa region. This photo was taken in 1954.

My brother and I finished school in 1951. A year later we entered the Agronomical Faculty of the Agricultural College in Verkhovka village, Obodov district Vinnitsa region. We were the only Jewish students in this College. We lived in a hostel. I began to meet with a Ukrainian guy in College. His name was Victor Puchalski. He was born in Aleksandrovka village, Vinnitsa region in 1932. He was

the only child in his family and his parents spoiled him a lot. During the Great Patriotic War Victor stayed in his village. He saw fascist atrocities against Jews and he came to respecting Jewish people. I told him that I was a Jew and that we were in occupation during the war. Victor and I fell in love and actually became a husband and wife during our last year in College. His parents were also positive about our relationships. Victor's two uncles were married to Jewish women, so there were Jews in their family already.

After finishing our College we came to my mother in Vladimir-Volynskiy. My mother didn't care about his nationality. She saw that we were in love and this was what mattered to her. I was pregnant. Victor and I got married. We didn't have a wedding party. My mother just made a small dinner for our family and Victor's father Andrei Puchalski who came to our wedding.

I remember Stalin's death in 1953. We, students, were crying. We didn't know how to live without him. We stood a guard of honor by his portrait in our College with tears in our eyes. My co-students were Ukrainian girls from surrounding villages. They had a good attitude toward me, but I never mentioned to anybody that I was in occupation. At that time there was official hostile attitude towards survivors in occupation during the war.