

Irina Lopko With Her Son Fyodor Lopko



This is me with my son Fyodor. This photo was made in Chernigov in 1965 when my son went to the first grade.

I got married in 1953. I met my future husband at a Komsomol conference in Chernigov [200 km from Kiev]. His name was Boris Lopko. We registered our marriage in a registry office in Chernigov. After graduation I taught the Russian language in a school in Nezhin for two years. On days off I traveled 90 km to my husband in Chernigov by bus. Boris worked as an electrician. Later I convinced him to enter extramural department of Polytechnic College in Chernigov. I helped him with his studies and did tests for him. When he received his diploma he said 'I can give you this diploma. It's yours', but I said 'Thanks, I already have one'. It was hard for us to be together. We were different people. He got irritated at my attachment to books and my inclination for going into the depth of things. During the period of anti-Semitism his instincts told him that it was better to conceal that he was a Jew and he never objected when somebody spoke against Jews. I was different and the first thing I said when meeting people was that I was a Jew.

At first we lived with my husband's relatives in Chernigov. Later we rented an apartment. When our baby was due my husband worked as an engineer and received a nice room in a communal apartment in the center of the town.

Our son was born in 1957. We named him Fyodor. My husband's father died shortly before our son was born. He was a very nice person and we named the baby after him. About five years later my mother-in-law moved in with us. Life became unbearable and I left my husband taking my son with me. I received a room and later an apartment. I had a small salary and asked my acquaintances to find me a better job. I got an offer from a geological organization. I worked there as an editor for five years. I finished editor's training course. Later I went to teach at the Advanced Teachers' Training College.

In 1967 after my father died I took my mother to Chernigov. She worked as an accountant until she turned 70. I was raising my son and my mother was helping me.

My son Fyodor graduated from the Faculty of Indo-European Languages in Kiev University. He is a Spanish and Portuguese translator. Now Fyodor owns a woodwork company in Moscow. He likes this business and is successful. He was married three times. There is something wrong with his marital life. His wives were non-Jewish. His older son David, named after my father, lives with his wife and mother in Kharkov [450 km from Kiev], and his 14-year-old daughter Dasha lives in Moscow. I hardly know her. My son knows that he is a Jew. When I ask him: 'Who do you feel you are?' he replies "I am who I am". He loves his relatives, our big family, but I didn't develop the love to Judaism and everything Jewish in him.