

Family Of Mera Shulman



This photograph was taken in our apartment in Leningrad in 1966. I do not remember who took it, most probably it was one of our close friends.

My husband Israel Abramovich Ptakul was born in Poland in Lodz on November 1st, 1923. His mother tongue was Yiddish. His father was very sick; he was unable to work because of his illness. His wife, a seamstress provided for the family. All their family huddled together in one small room.

I met my future husband during the war, in evacuation. In 1943 I was a pupil of the 10th form. It happened in Novotroitsk. In our class there appeared three Jewish boys - escapees (from Poland in 1939). All of them were very capable, but their Russian was poor. Therefore they studied at our school only two weeks and were sent down. One of these boys entered Technical school, where they were more interested in their technical abilities. He had a reading-book of Russian literature for the 10th form. I was in great need of that book and its owner often brought it to me at my request. Besides he helped me to accomplish tasks in physics. And later he fell in love with me. We got married in 1946 in Riga.

I did not take my husband's name, because I did not like it and got accustomed to my maiden name. Besides I did not want to change my passport and school-leaving certificate (and it would have been necessary for me in case of changing my family name).

My future husband graduated from the Technical School in Novotroitsk with honors. Later he graduated from the Leningrad Electrotechnical College and got a job at Electrosila Factory [Leningrad Corporation for construction of electric machines - one of the largest USSR factories in this sphere]. He worked there until his retirement in 1997. He was an electrical engineer.

My daughter Lubov Israelevna Ptakul was born on April 22nd, 1959 in Leningrad. When a child, she said 'I understood the way you gave me birth on the birthday of Lenin. You are engineers: you first draw and then give birth.' She was very good and clever girl. She has clever fingers as her father and grandfather had. She finished school in Leningrad in 1976 and entered the faculty of primary education at the State Pedagogical College named after Hertsen. At first she worked as a teacher

at primary school, and now she teaches Russian language and literature in senior forms. She did not marry. I blame her father for it. He was always afraid of her early marriage and stopped my slightest attempts in this direction.

We gave no traditional Jewish education to our children. Time, when they were growing was not conducive to it. We never told them that they were Jews, but it was made without us. One day little Lev asked me, who the Jews were and why he was a Jew. I explained him that there were different peoples: Russians, Jews. But he was upset: obviously boys in the court yard had explained him that it was not so honorable to be a Jew. And when my son grew up, he used to say 'And nevertheless it is good that I look like a Georgian.' Certainly we told our children about the war, about our lost relatives, about our life in evacuation. We never celebrated Jewish holidays, never visited synagogue (we even did not know, where it was). We also never celebrated Christmas or Easter. We did not observe Tradition, but at the same time arranged circumcision for our son. Our children got some idea about Jewish Tradition, when we visited our relatives in Riga. They celebrated all Jewish holidays and some of them happened to be during our stay there. At home we never ate matzah, never used separate plates and dishes for meat and dairy, never cooked traditional Jewish meals.