

Sonia Leiderman With Her Parents



From left to right: my mother Genia Gempeld, I and my father Itzyk Weisenberg. We were photographed on my 15th birthday. This photo was taken in Mogilyov-Podolskiy in 1947.

On the early morning of 19 March 1944 Soviet tanks came to Mogilyov-Podolskiy. All people ran into the streets to thank soldiers for the liberation us from the ghetto, we were happy to be free. Life was gradually improving. The war was still going on, but it was over for us. We still didn't have sufficient food, but there was a different countdown point for us: we were happy to be walking in the streets without fear of raids or shootings. I wanted to get a job to help mama. A village woman hired me to look after her daughter, do cleaning and washing. She didn't pay me, but she provided three meals per day.

In late summer 1945 my father returned from the front. He went to work as a carpenter to the mechanical plant, which resumed its operations. My father made wooden boxes for the plant products. My younger sister Nyusia went to school. My older sister Zina also returned to Mogilyov-Podolskiy and went to work at the Zagotzerno office. Of course, our life improved. My father received a salary and food packages. Zina worked as a lab assistant. She made tests of the grain that kolkhozes supplied. She received about 0.5 kg grain for test purposes and then employees could take this grain home. Mama used to crash it with a pestle in a mortar and cook it.

After WWII my parents wanted me to go back to school, but during the occupation I got used to live on my own and I didn't quite feel like resuming my studies. I thought I had to go work and make my own contribution into the family budget. I had only finished 3 forms at school, and I was 14 years old. Nobody wanted to hire me until I finally convinced director of a trade office to hire me. I started selling milk. It was hard work: I got very little money for this work while I had to work all day carrying heavy milk cans. I asked director to give me some different work and he sent me to sell fish. So, I worked as a fish vendor in a kiosk at the central market for the rest of my life. I retired from there. It was hard work. There were no loaders and I had to carry heavy boxes with frozen fish and cut heavy briquettes into pieces. I never had a chance to sit down during the day: there were always customers lining up; I had no breaks. There was no heating in the kiosk: it was

freezing in winter, and it was hot in summer. I didn't go on vacation trying to earn more. My customers liked me: I joked and was cheerful and tried to serve them as best as I could. There were 3 fish kiosks one next to another, but there were always people lining to my kiosk. It's a small town where people know each other, and I knew all of my customers.