

David Wainshelboim With A Group Of Students And Academician Filatov



This is me, David Wainshelboim, during my study in Odessa, photographed with a group of students of Academician Filatov's school, Filatov is sitting in the center. He had a beard. I am the 3rd on the right in the upper row, wearing a hat. Odessa, 1953.

In 1945 my uncle helped me to prepare for entrance exams to the Medical College of Kishinev. I passed the exams successfully and was admitted. I finished my college in 1951 and got a job assignment to the hospital in a small district town in Irkutsk region in Siberia. I worked as a surgeon/ophthalmologist. The hospital where I was sent was a complete mess and I took over my job with great enthusiasm. I operated on patients with various problems: I helped at baby delivery, went to the taiga, when workers were injured, and provided treatment to all kinds of patients. I made friends in Siberia. One of my friends worked at the power plant and Sasha Kligma, another friend, was procurer at the shipyard. They were both Jews. We were friends and supported each other: my friends refurbished my room. We also celebrated Jewish holidays. I started fasting on Yom Kippur in 1943, when I got to know that my parents perished, and I still observe this fast.

I felt well in Siberia. I knew that people needed me. However, I was eager to become a scientist and master my professional skills as surgeon/ophthalmologist. I wrote to the Odessa Ophthalmologic Institute, headed by the great eye-doctor Filatov, and received an invitation to a course of training in this institute in early 1953. This was the period of the outburst of the case of the 'Kremlin poisoning doctors.' Fortunately, Filatov and his followers weren't affected by this case. I got a warm welcome in Odessa; I received a room at the dormitory of the institute and started my training. I remember the announcement of the death of Stalin in 1953, and how we sighed with relief. We understood that this was to put an end to the persecution of our colleagues. I worked and studied in Odessa for a year. Then I returned to Kishinev.